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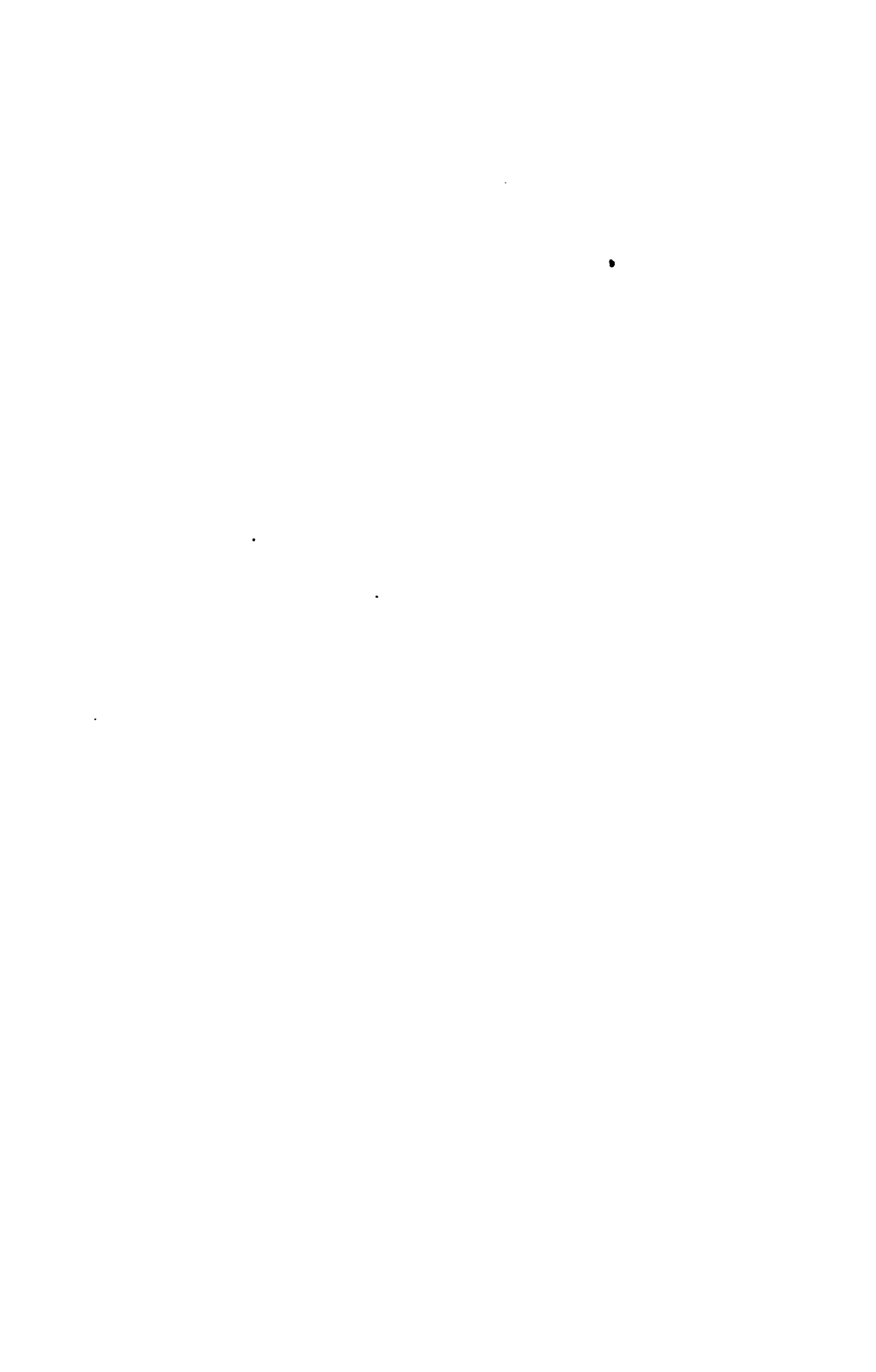
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**CROKER'S BOSWELL**

**AND**

**BOSWELL.**



# CROKER'S BOSWELL

AND

# BOSWELL.

*Studies in the "Life of Johnson."*

BY

PERCY FITZGERALD, M.A., F.S.A.

"I know at this time no less than a hundred and twenty-seven Jesuits  
between Charing Cross and Temple Bar!"

CROKER, in "*The Good-Natured Man.*"



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Inscribed,

WITH MUCH REGARD,

TO

THE REV. WHITEWELL ELWIN.



## PREFACE.

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THE following pages have been written *con amore*, with a view of contributing to the further enjoyment of one of the most enjoyable books in our language. Many an old monument, however, before its beauties can be thoroughly appreciated, must be first cleared of its whitewash, pews, and "churchwarden's Gothic" which has overlaid the genuine work; and to this wholesome restoration of "Boswell's Johnson" the first portion of the volume is devoted.

The Reader, like myself, will be amazed to discover that "one of the best edited books in the English language," as the "Quarterly Review" styled "Croker's Boswell," exhibits an elaborate system of defacement and mutilation: and that the Editor has shown himself a perfect "churchwarden" in his destructive labours. As a new and revised edition of his otherwise excellent work is announced, it is hoped that what is submitted here will not be overlooked.



In the second part I have brought together the result of my own little researches—which, I think, will be found not uninteresting. Indeed, the first, while controversial in character, involves many instructive matters of discussion and speculation—so that the whole, it is hoped, will form a contribution to “the public stock of harmless pleasure” for which we are so largely indebted to the ingenious and ever-entertaining James Boswell, of Auchinleck, Esq.

LONDON, 1880.

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PART THE FIRST.



CROKER'S BOSWELL.

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# CROKER'S BOSWELL.

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## CHAPTER I.

### A REVIEWER OF THE OLD TIMES.

“MR. RIGBY was member for one of Lord Monmouth's boroughs. He was the manager of Lord Monmouth's parliamentary influence, and the auditor of his vast estates. He was more; he was Lord Monmouth's companion when in England, his correspondent when abroad; hardly his counsellor, for Lord Monmouth never required advice; but Mr. Rigby could instruct him in matters of details, which Mr. Rigby made amusing. Rigby was not a professional man; indeed, his origin, education, early pursuits, and studies were equally obscure; but he had contrived in good time to squeeze himself into parliament, by means which no one could ever comprehend, and then set up to be a perfect man of business. The world took him at his word, for he was bold, acute, and voluble; with no thought, but a good deal of desultory information; and though destitute of all imagination and noble sentiment, was

blessed with a vigorous, mendacious fancy, fruitful in small expedients, and never happier than when devising shifts for great men's scrapes.

“They say that all of us have one chance in this life, and so it was with Rigby. After a struggle of many years, after a long series of the usual alternatives of small successes and small failures, after a few cleverish speeches and a good many cleverish pamphlets, with a considerable reputation, indeed, for pasquinades, most of which he never wrote, and articles in reviews to which it was whispered he had contributed, Rigby, who had already intrigued himself into a subordinate office, met with Lord Monmouth.

“Mr. Rigby had a classical retreat, not distant from this establishment, which he esteemed a Tusculum. There, surrounded by his busts and books, he wrote his lampoons and articles; massacred a she liberal (it was thought that no one could lash a woman like Rigby), cut up a rising genius whose politics were different from his own, or scarified some unhappy wretch who had brought his claims before parliament, proving, by garbled extracts from official correspondence that no one could refer to, that the malcontent instead of being a victim, was, on the contrary, a defaulter. Tadpole and Taper would back Rigby for a ‘slashing reply’ against the field. Here, too, at the end of a busy week, he found it occasionally convenient to entertain a clever friend or two of equivocal

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reputation, with whom he had become acquainted in former days of equal brotherhood. No one was more faithful to his early friends than Mr. Rigby, particularly if they could write a squib."

Such was the portrait drawn by Mr. Disraeli of the most successful editor of Boswell's Johnson—Mr. John Wilson Croker. It can scarcely be considered over-coloured.

As a commentary on this sketch, to show what training this strangely constituted mind had undergone, we need only consider the extraordinary series of articles on which he had been engaged for so many years. All these were of a special kind. Wherever there was a subject which seemed to be fitted with secret drawers, and crannies, and unsavoury corners, our critic nibbed his admiralty quill and set himself with due gusto to his office. By-and-by, having found the passion growing on him, the next step was to discover secret drawers and crannies where none such existed. A volume could be written fitted with the extraordinary mare's nests constructed during a long course of years by this artificer. His vision grew distempered, his temper morbid. Like his namesake in the play, he seemed to see plots and devilish combinations everywhere. He gradually learned a sort of art in these things; and, by ingeniously putting detached passages and facts together—setting them out in short abrupt paragraphs and dressing them in a



peculiar livery of italics and capitals—contrived to impose some startling effects on the superficial reader. The effect was heightened by rough language, boisterous scorn, and loud noisy laugh as of contempt and derision. This art was the peculiar patent of Mr. Croker.

At the same time it must be said that if a reader desires a couple of hours of genuine amusement not unmixed with wonder, let him peruse the articles on "The Georgian Era" (Q. R. v. 53, p. 458), that on "Heron's notes" (v. 90, p. 206), on "Prince Puckler Muskau" (v. 46, p. 518), or the short one on Lady Morgan's "Italy" (v. 25, p. 529). There are various articles *passim* on French subjects, on French ladies, who generally are "raked fore and aft," bludgeoned in the most merciless style.

Some are really excellent from their untiring vivacity and versatility of abuse. Witness the one on Lord Malmesbury's expedition to the Court of Brunswick; and his *exposés* of the vaunts of French military *spadassins*, are quite appropriate and even necessary.

Special objects of his hatred were, first and foremost, literary women. 2nd. Radicals. 3rd. Frenchmen and perhaps foreigners in general. All persons falling within these objectionable categories he pursued and hunted down.

The late Lady Morgan was a particular object of his detestation. He regularly waited in ambush for each of her books. He had been one of her ad-

mirers in Dublin when a young barrister, and only a few years later, on the publication of her "France," assailed her in an article unique for rudeness and malignancy. In it she is accused *seriatim* of "Bad taste, bombast and nonsense, blunders, ignorance of the French language and manners, Jacobinism, falsehood, licentiousness, and impiety." It is sprinkled thickly with such extraordinary phrases as "She impudently calls them," "disgusting in principle and contemptible in style," "this woman." "She boasts," he says, "that O'Donnell has been translated into three languages. *What* three languages? She does not state; but if the *English* be one of them, we humbly beg to be informed where that work is to be had." And almost the last words are: "This, we fear, is of a piece with the rest; or, in other words, a downright falsehood."

Lady Morgan, however, presently retorted by introducing him as "Crawley" into one of her novels. When her next book of travels appeared, the reviewer fell on her in his turn, and thus it went on.

When Lord John Russell published his *Memoirs of Moore*, political partisanship, and some resentment towards the poet, joined to inflame the critic's bile.

Reviewing the work, he says:—

"On Moore's wife the editor appends this note:—

"'Mr. Moore was married to Miss Dyke on *March* 22, 1811, at St. Martin's Church in London.'

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“ We throw into a foot-note a few words on this subject (chiefly collected from the Diary) which seem necessary to supply the editor’s injudicious omission, and to explain Moore’s real position. We do so the more willingly, lest our silence, added to that of Lord John, should lead to a suspicion that anything could be truly said derogatory in the slightest degree from the merits of ‘ this excellent person,’ as she is, no doubt justly, described by Lord John, and by every one else that we have ever heard speak of her.”

The “ foot-note ” accordingly was supplied, in which all about her origin and profession, was carefully brought together for the benefit of the poor lady. The ingenious reason, “ lest our silence should lead to suspicion that anything derogatory ” could be said, being the most amusing trait that could be found in the annals of “ slashing ” reviews.

A great portion of the article in question is devoted to analyzing the Diary with a view of supporting a theory highly agreeable to poor Mrs. Moore—that her husband was setting down records of sham affection for her in his Diary—which he takes the trouble thus to tabulate:—

“ This contrast between his professions and his practice may, in the hurry and bustle of the Diary, escape a cursory reader—but will be exhibited in the following synopsis of Moore’s movements and engagements for a fortnight at the *Allée des Veuves*—





friend in Germany saying that the Germans were learning English in order to read'—Milton, Shakespeare?—No :—' Lord Byron and ME.'—ii. 299. ' *By the bye*, was pleased to hear from Rogers that Luttrell said, "If anybody can make such a subject [Captain Rock] lively, Moore will." *By the bye*, received a letter from a Sir John Wycherly, of whom I know nothing, apologising for such a liberty with the *first poet of the age*.'—iii. 11. He meets Mr. Hutchinson, just come from being made M.P. for Cork, where—' *By the bye*, they hipped and hurraed me as the *Poet, Patriot, and Pride of Ireland*. I am becoming a stock toast at their dinners. Had seen this very morning an account of a dinner to Mr. Denny of Cork, when I was drunk as the *Poet, and Patriot* with great applause.'—ii. 157. 'Forgot, *by the bye*, to take notice of some verses of Luttrell's :—

" I am told, dear Moore, your lays are sung—  
Can it be true, you lucky man ?—  
By moonlight, in the Persian tongue,  
Along the streets of Ispahan."—iii. 301.

But he does not tell us that Mr. Luttrell's authority for the fact was—Moore himself, who in another *by the bye* tells us where *he* got it. ' *By the bye*, Mr. Stretch, with whom I walked yesterday [in Paris] said he had been told by the *nephew of the Persian Ambassador*, that Lalla Rookh had been translated

into their language, and that the songs are sung about everywhere.'—iii. 167. He meets Mr. and Miss Canning at a Paris dinner, and observed—'a circumstance which showed *a very pleasant sort of intelligence* between the father and the daughter.'—iii. 160. Our readers will, by this time, not be surprised at the '*pleasant sort*' of sympathy which Moore's ingenuity was on the watch to detect between these two brilliant intelligences. 'I,' adds the Diarist—'*I told a story* to Miss Canning, which the father was the only one who overheard, and it evidently *struck them both* as very comical.'—Ib. Occasionally his self-importance takes a still higher flight. At an assembly at Devonshire House—'The Duke, in coming to the door to meet the *Duke of Wellington*, near whom I stood, turned aside *first* to shake hands with *me*—though the great Captain's hand *was waiting ready stretched out*.'—iv. 76. Sometimes when we think that he is about to offer a sugar-plum to a bystander, we are surprised at the legerdemain with which he pops it into his own mouth. Thus—Catalani visits Dublin when Moore happened to be there; a Mr. Abbot 'brought my sister Ellen to introduce to Catalani. Her *kindness* to Nell, calling her'—of course one expects some little *kind* compliment to the young lady herself—not a bit of it—'calling her—*la sœur d'Anacréon!*' We shall conclude these, after all, scanty samples with one which

takes the unusual form of humility, and is, with its context, even more amusing. After a page of recapitulation of the various forms of compliment and odours of incense which he received at a Harmonic meeting at Bath, he concludes with the most amiable *naïveté*: 'During the ball was stared at on all sides without mercy. *In such a place as BATH any little lion makes a stir.*'—ii. 280. This is rather hard on Bath, as we have just seen what pains the same *little lion* takes to let us know that he was making the same kind of *stir* all the world over—in various shapes and distant regions—as a nightingale, a bird of Paradise, an eagle, and a dandy—at Berlin, Cork, Ispahan, and the corner of Little Longford Street!"

But at the close comes a touch truly characteristic. He had nearly exhausted the subject in an article of enormous length—70 pages long. As it is passing through the press he tells us that a new publication on the subject has just appeared of remarkable interest. "The details in it," he says, with anticipatory unction, "are often very painful—sometimes ignoble—but they are intensely characteristic,—and more vivid—though it is merely a pamphlet—more real and true than all Lord John Russell's volumes." This existing production was after Mr. Croker's own heart, for it was what? the reader may guess; a catalogue of a mass of private family letters which Lord



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John was discreet enough not to use or felt that he ought not to use. They were to be sold by auction. Even the wretched scraps given in the catalogue were of sufficient interest, because *secret*. There was the charm. It suggests the story told by Johnson of some man who pestered him again for an article which Johnson could not find, and which continued to be of the last importance and moment to him so long as Johnson could not find it; when he did, he said it was of no consequence.

The article excited much attention and deep resentment, and in the next instalment of the life, Lord John Russell, in reference to a remark of Moore's, "Barnes begged me to spare Croker, which I told him was an unnecessary caution, as we were old allies," added this biting comment:—"To Moore it was unnecessary to address a request to spare a friend. If the request had been addressed to the other party to spare Moore, what would have been the result? Probably while Moore was alive and able to wield his pen, it would have been successful. Had Moore been dead it would only have served to give additional zest to the pleasure of safe malignity." It will hardly be credited that the Reviewer who in his article had exhausted all the arts of ridicule and ill-nature, was stung to fury by this allusion, and wrote in his most deadly style to protest—now, he said, in his seventy-fourth year, and a probably advanced stage of a

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mortal disease, pleas that might have been vainly addressed to him. As to "safe malignity," "your own feelings would be a test of that; those best can paint them who have felt them most." He then spoke of "your personal impertinence to me," and declared that Moore was always asking him for official favours, and on excellent terms with him. Lord John wrote in reply with equal bitterness, frankly owning that he had written the note designedly, having in view the attack on Mrs. Moore, then in broken health and shattered spirits. "Were you justified," he asks, "in embittering the last years of the widow of Moore, sneering at his domestic affections, and loading his memory with reproach on account of a few depreciating phrases? I omitted several passages regarding you, which, though not bitter and malicious, might, I thought, give you pain." He adds that, "there was one passage in which he said he found you less clever and more vain than he had supposed."

The veteran had not lost his cunning, and knew how to retort. In return for this threat he writes:— "What! my lord, have you ventured to contrast what you indicate as my malignant ingratitude towards Moore with his undeviating and kindly feelings towards me, while it turns out you had before your eyes several mentions of me still more offensive!" The turn he gives to Lord John's reference to Mrs.

Moore is no less adroit. She was, he declared, "an amiable lady, for whom I feel, without knowing her, as much sympathy and respect as your lordship professes, and more than you have shown in the indiscreet and heedless way in which you have so inextricably mixed up her name in almost every page of the discordant farrago."

Lord John, however, closed his letter in reply with a sort of apology, which ought to have soothed the old Reviewer:—"I may add an expression of my regret that, at your age and in your present state, you should have been annoyed by the publication of Moore's 'Diary.'"

This did not quite content Croker:—"I was not *annoyed by the publication of Moore's 'Diary,'* but by your lordship's note which was no part of the 'Diary,' but on the contrary, at variance with its text, and which contained a double imputation which I felt to be wholly undeserved. Your lordship, I am sure, will feel that the nearer one approaches to the limits of life the more chary one ought to be of one's reputation and honour." And then, with some of the old craft, throws out a feeler, as to the letters of his which Lord John held. "I cannot but hope, for Moore's sake, that those other passages which your lordship has alluded to may be traceable to the same not unamiable motive."

This was received coldly:—"It would be, of course,

useless for us to attempt to persuade one another. Mrs. Moore has many, or at least several, of yours to her husband which I have not seen ; of course I should not think of publishing them without your permission."

On which the old Reviewer breaks out into a fury :—" There is an expression in your last note which I think is necessary to notice.

" I had no motive and no intention to persuade your lordship to anything. I did not meddle with your opinions. *I charged you with a gross and deliberate offence against me.* The public is now the judge whether I have proved my charge."

It is not difficult, however, to trace the reason of a special exhibition of malevolence in the case of the "Heron Notes." An old baronet published his recollections in his 86th year, and was assailed in the most unexampled style, for his "innocuous, though disreputable twaddle," and for recording, "as *matters of fact*, imputations on our political friends, and in one instance at least against ourselves, of the most absolute *falsehood*—falsehood which can only be attributed to the grossest ignorance, or to the blindest malice, or a combination of both—and under which, personally contemptible as the penman may be, neither truth, justice, friendship, nor honour can permit us to be silent."

The baronet having alluded to his family, our

Reviewer set about his favourite researches:—"His nephew tells us 'his professional line was the *not brilliant* one of a *chamber counsel* or special pleader,' and that—"from not being worth a farthing"—'he had acquired an income that allowed him to be living in respect and comfort in *Grosvenor Square*,' at the time that he was so strangely selected by Lord Buckinghamshire for an important political office. We are afraid that Sir Robert's gratitude to his benefactor—and perhaps the same vanity which induced him to record the residence in *Grosvenor Square*—may have caused him to assign to the old gentleman a professional grade, 'not brilliant' indeed—as he admits—but still somewhat higher than exact truth would warrant; for we find from an entry in the Rolls that 'Richard Heron, of Newark, in the county of Nottingham, was admitted a *solicitor* on the 24th of May, 1748,' and continued on the roll till the 25th of April, 1769—the date, we suppose, of his retirement to 'the respect and comfort of *Grosvenor Square*.'"

The old man having said something of Prince Polignac and the Duke of Wellington, our Reviewer replies:—"We do not presume to controvert Sir Robert's experiments on owls and mice; but as to the Duke of Wellington and Prince Polignac, we now repeat, that the fact which Sir Robert says he has *reason to know*, is a downright lie."

He winds up in this strain:—"It is distasteful and grievous to us to be forced by this crazy simpleton to reproduce on so small an occasion the illustrious names we have above enumerated—and we shall conclude this topic by confessing that the only thing that looks like candour throughout the entire volume is the kind of moral courage—very like impudence—which has induced Sir Robert to publish concerning such men such passages as we have quoted. We have exhausted our space, our time, and perhaps the patience of our readers—certainly our own. We could have extended ten times farther our exposure of this farrago of nonsense and libel; but we have confined ourselves to some prominent cases which admitted of documentary and chronological refutation. We trust, however, that we have done enough in thus warning the public against about the falsest and most impudent publication we have ever happened to read."

The reader will speculate as to the reason for this surprising display of venom. The unfortunate old baronet had called Mr. Croker "a most determined jobber," and dwelt on a transaction which at the time had caused some talk. It is amusing, then, to find Mr. Croker indignantly vindicating "Mr. Croker" from behind his Quarterly screen. At the same time it may be believed that he wrote in this fashion because he

could write in no other way, and I can fancy that he was all the time perfectly genuine, and from habit had grown to believe that he was denouncing in certainly strong, but suitable terms, what he supposed deserved to be stigmatized.

## CHAPTER II.

### MR. CROKER'S SYSTEM OF EDITING.

It is curious that two professional critics of reputation should have attempted of late years to treat Mr. Boswell's great work, each on a totally different principle. The Right Honourable J. Wilson Croker, in what has long been considered the standard edition, exhibited one process; and Mr. George Henry Lewes—a writer of a very different type—superintended another. Mr. Croker's method was to expand, fill out, add profuse garnishings, and sauce. Mr. Lewes's was to boil down, strain through sieves and jelly-bags, until all that was superfluous was got rid of. Both modes, as it might be said of cookery, are equally false and objectionable, and utterly spoil the meat thus treated.

But it is bewildering to find that two men, whose profession was criticism, who had spent their lives in cultivating the critical faculty, and who, if the nice instinct were wanting, could by practice have supplied it—should have been so utterly astray in the most elementary principles of the gay science. Mr. Croker was for some thirty or forty years connected



with the "Quarterly Review," and scarcely a number appeared without a contribution from his hand. Mr. G. H. Lewes was presumed to be a critic of the first order, of the finest and most cultured taste. Yet Mr. Croker thought it orthodox to insert large batches of foreign matter wherever he could find an opening, to rough-hew his author, re-shape, transpose, and omit where it seemed good to him; to reprove sentiments that were unpalatable, correct the various speakers in the dialogue, substitute proper words for improper ones; and generally maul, trim, and restore according to his whims and prejudices. Mr. Lewes, on the contrary, decreed that Boswell himself had been too diffuse, and would gain by compression, applied almost by hydraulic power. A Mr. Main—now dead—worked at the task under his supervision; all light talk, that did not refer to some *essential* principle, bearing on Johnson's character and proceedings, was got rid of as waste flesh; the pith and substance being left, in the shape it ought to have been put before the public, had our biographer known better. This principle was gravely set out in an introduction to the small volume, into which the great work had been squeezed; and many, while indifferent to the performance, will remember the sense almost of bewilderment with which people of culture speculated over the meaning and motive of so inconsistent a process. Of the two, his was certainly the

worst piece of sacrilege ; for in Mr. Croker's volumes, the original structure can be made out, though much maimed.

It was in the year 1831, that this laborious work made its appearance in five volumes, when it became at once established in the rank of works "which no gentleman's library should be without." We are told officially that 40,000 copies have been sold, "and such is still the demand for it, that even now a new edition is in preparation." This total seems much less than one could have anticipated, considering the long interval of nearly fifty years ; and the fact of a new edition being got ready, may attend even a very moderate demand. On that new edition, however, it is hoped that what is contained in the following pages may have a wholesome influence, being prompted solely by interest in, and admiration for, Boswell's impartial and ever-entertaining book.

We shall proceed to investigate some of the leading blemishes of Mr. Croker's treatment of our author.

### § *The System of Wholesale Interpolation.*

The principles which Mr. Croker laid down for himself in his undertaking, were based on false critical instinct. First, to consider his plea for bringing foreign matter into Boswell's work.

All through he has introduced into the text large portions of Johnson's letters to Mrs. Thrale. For this proceeding he devises, as usual, a theory. Boswell would have used them if he could; so "valuable" are they. Mr. Croker is, therefore, only doing what Boswell would have done. But why did *not* Boswell use them? They were "out of his reach." He dared not, owing to the law of copyright; though from them he has occasionally, but cautiously—having fear of the copyright law before his eyes—made interesting extracts.

Now, Mr. Croker must have known that Boswell had no such scruples as to other works, such as Hawkins's or Mrs. Piozzi's. Again, he takes special complacency in having thrust the "Tour to the Hebrides" into the body of the work in its proper chronological place. This proceeding he thus justifies:—

"The most important addition, however, which I have made is one that *needs no apology*—the incorporation with the 'Life' of the whole of the 'Tour to the Hebrides,' which Boswell published in one volume in 1785, and which, no doubt, if he could legally have done so, he would himself have incorporated in the 'Life'—of which indeed he expressly tells us, he looks on the 'Tour' but as a *portion*. It is only wonderful, that since the copyright has expired, any edition of his 'Life of Johnson' should have been

published without the addition of this, the most original, curious, and amusing portion of the whole biography."

It may be safely stated (1) that Boswell would *not* have incorporated the "Tour" with the "Life;" and (2) it is almost certain that he could have done so, had he wished it.

(1) Boswell had too much critical tact to make such a fusion of what are distinct works. Any one with critical faculty will see that the elaborate treatment of so short an episode in Johnson's career, by which the treatment of a few weeks fills a space equal to a fourth of the whole "Life," would disturb the balance of the work. The reader who comes to read Johnson's *life*, and its important facts, will feel himself too long delayed over such details. This, it seems to me, is unanswerable. Further, the tone is different. There Boswell writes as, in familiar phrase, "our own reporter," or journalist. He is describing his own adventures. It is an account of *a Tour*. In the other he is the grave biographer—judicial—with his own personality more or less sunk. But the two works make one, and should be inseparable—the "Tour" coming after the "Life." \* Indeed, our author himself would seem to have expressed his own wishes on this point when he says:

\* This arrangement has been followed in the present writer's edition, as in Malone's and many others.

“His various adventures, and the force and vivacity of his mind, as exercised during this peregrination, upon innumerable topics, have been faithfully, and to the best of my abilities, displayed in my ‘Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides,’ to which, as the public has been pleased to honour it by a very extensive circulation, *I beg leave to refer, as to a separate and remarkable portion of his life, which may be there seen in detail.*”

(2) Mr. Croker's idea that Boswell had not the *power* to combine his two works, seems fanciful. They were both issued by the same publisher, Mr. Dilly, his old friend and host, who would have complied with any wish of his. And as Boswell published the “Life” on “his own account,” and as no new edition of the “Tour” had been called for since 1786, there would have been no difficulty in making an agreement.

Again, Mr. Croker's arrangement causes a certain dislocation, passages having to be shifted; and above all, Boswell's always interesting, because candid, prefaces, advertisements, dedications, &c., are *thrown out* altogether! Nay, Mr. Boswell's table of contents to the “Tour,” epitomizing the subject of each day's adventure, it also dismisses; and a new set of headings, of Croker's own manufacture, is substituted. Boswell's are very bright and effective; Croker's, fuller and duller.

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The division into chapters, which we owe to Mr. Croker's direction, and which is adopted in succeeding editions, is yet another proof of the lack of the true, fine, critical instinct. A few words will show this. The vulgar idea would be that a book has only to be cut up, or divided, into chapters. But it should be written in chapters. A chapter is, or should be, a form of the composition, artistically devised; the events arranged with a view to effect; the close written up to, or written down to, as the case may be. It will be seen at once that this result cannot be secured by merely inserting the heading "CHAPTER" at particular intervals. But, it seems to me, the whole tone of Boswell's book is opposed to these forms; it is a sustained and unbroken narrative, and the style is suited to the form.

In process of time it was forced on Croker that he had gone astray; but how reluctantly, and with what haughty pride he acknowledged the necessity of change, will be seen from the following:

"I hazarded," he says, "the experiment of in-laying upon the text such passages from the other biographers of Johnson as seemed necessary to fill up the long and frequent chasms which exist in Boswell's narrative. This plan afforded a more complete view of *Johnson's life*, though it gave, I must own, a less perfect one of *Boswell's work*. It had, also, as I

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originally feared, 'a confused and heterogeneous appearance'—with the further disadvantage of not completely fulfilling its object—for the materials turned out to be too copious to admit of a thorough incorporation. On the whole, then, the publisher thought it better, in a second edition, 8 vols. 12mo, 1835, to omit from the text all extracts from other works. . . . Boswell's 'Tour to the Hebrides,' 'Johnson's own Letters,' his 'Notes of a Tour in Wales,' and extracts from his correspondence with Mrs. Thrale, being only excepted. That edition included some corrections and many additions of my own; but it was carried through the press by the late Mr. Wright, . . . who selected the *Johnsoniana*, broke the narrative into chapters, and added some notes, which I have now marked with his name."

"A complete view of Johnson's life." He thus still believed that this was the proper view to take. It may be doubted if there are "any long and frequent chasms" in Boswell's narrative, which is certainly complete from *his* point of view, though not offering the same amount of details in every part. This is the mistake of modern biography; the supposing that details are sufficient to furnish forth a *view* of a man's life.

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§ *Omissions—Alterations of the Text.*

These are of the most arbitrary description; notes being made into text, and text into notes; with alterations of sentences, omissions of lines, &c. I will give only a few specimens of this treatment, adding that it is carried out consistently through the whole work.

Under date of Nov., 1754, Johnson writes to Warton, who supplied Boswell with some notes. One of them, on Zachariah Williams, is wholly left out; others, re-shaped. On the lines of Levett, at the verse, "Nor, letter'd arrogance, deny," &c., Boswell has a "hit" at the knight: "In both editions of Sir J. Hawkins' life of Dr. Johnson, 'lettered *ignorance*' is printed." This Mr. Croker suppresses. A characteristic note of Boswell's, on the lines, "A painted vest Prince Vortiger had on," runs as follows, Mr. Croker suppressing all the words in italics.

"*An acute* correspondent of the 'European Magazine,' April, 1792, has completely exposed the [*a*] mistake, *which has been unaccountably frequent in*, [*of*] ascribing these lines to Blackmore, notwithstanding that Sir Richard Steele, in *that very popular work*, 'The Spectator,' No. 43, mentions them as written by the author of 'The British Princes,' the Hon. Edward Howard."

Again. Garrick writes to Boswell:



“ Now, for the Epitaphs ! ”

“ *These, together with the verses on George the Second, and Colley Cibber, as his Poet Laureat, of which imperfect copies have gone about, will appear in my ‘ Life of Dr. Johnson.’* ”

“ I have no more paper,” &c.

Now this break, and the pleasant advertisement, are quite Boswellian. But Croker dismisses it altogether, and substitutes : “ This refers to the epitaph on Philips, and the verses on George the Second, and Colley Cibber, as his poet laureat, for which see ante, p. 43.”

On one of Johnson's Latin letters to Dr. Laurence, dated May, 1782, Boswell has a note, consisting of three short extracts from letters to Dr. Laurence's daughter, introduced by :—“ Soon after the above letter, Dr. Laurence left London.” Mr. Croker inserts it in the text, though the word “ above ” is peculiarly appropriate to a note.

A note, under Nov., 1783, beginning, “ My worthy friend, Mr. John Nichols, was present when Mr. Henderson, the actor, paid a visit to Dr. Johnson, and was received in a very courteous manner. See ‘ Gent. Mag.,’ June.”

“ See ‘ Gent. Mag. ! ’ ” Boswell would never have thus disfigured his text. When Boswell speaks of “ *Embru* ” for Edinburgh, Mr. Croker alters it to “ *Embru,* ”

Speaking of an inscription on Lord Lovat's tomb, in the Highlands, we find the following in Croker's text:—

“There is an inscription on a piece of white marble inserted in it, which I suspect to have been the composition of Lord Lovat himself, being much in his pompous style.

“I have preserved this inscription, though of no great value, thinking it characteristical of a man who has made some noise in the world. Dr. Johnson said it was poor stuff, such as Lord Lovat's butler might have written.”

It will be seen that something is wrong here. The inscription is expected between the two paragraphs. In Boswell we find it, but his Editor has thrust it into a note. The note on the story of Lady Grange's imprisonment is cut into two, and referred to different portions of the text.

Certain omissions are most unaccountable. When Johnson was dying, we are told:—

“Mr. Windham having placed a pillow conveniently to support him, he thanked him for his kindness, and said, ‘That will do—all that a pillow can do.’”

We look in vain for this passage in any of Mr. Croker's later editions. Why it was omitted is inscrutable.

Another of Mr. Croker's arbitrary proceedings is

the removal of some of his author's notes and arguments, which seemed to him too long for their place, to the end of the book. These dictated pleadings, such as "The Argument for the Negro," "The Schoolmaster," &c., are certainly uninteresting; but still we like them in their place; they have an artistic fitness, and we seem to hear the ponderous sage rolling out his periods as his secretary wrote. But what will be said to the following? In a discussion on happiness and misery, Boswell puts a long note about a Rev. Mr. Churton, who had "favoured him with some remarks;" which, however, did not seem suitable to Mr. Croker:—

"Here followed a very long note, or rather dissertation, by the Rev. Mr. Churton, on the subject of Johnson's opinion of the misery of human life, which I have thought will be read most conveniently in the Appendix; and, indeed, I only *insert it there that my readers may have all Boswell.*"

"Indeed, I only insert it there" (!)

Now portions of this note are specially characteristic, and in Boswell's quaintly formal manner:

"Though I have, in some degree, obviated any reflections against my illustrious friend's dark views of life, when considering in the course of this work his 'Rambler' and his 'Rasselas,' I am obliged to Mr. Churton for complying with my request of his permission to insert his remarks, being conscious of

the weight of *what he judiciously suggests as to the melancholy in my own constitution.* His more pleasing views of life, I hope, are just. \* \* \*

“His letter was accompanied with a present from himself of his ‘Sermons at the Bampton Lecture,’ and from his friend, Dr. Townson, the venerable rector of Malpas, in Cheshire, of his ‘Discourses on the Gospels,’ together with the following extract of a letter from that excellent person, who is now gone to receive the reward of his labours: ‘Mr. Boswell is not only very entertaining in his works, but they are so replete with moral and religious sentiments, without an instance, as far as I know, of a contrary tendency, that I cannot help having a great esteem for him; and if you think such a trifle as a copy of the Discourses, *ex dono authoris*, would be acceptable to him, I should be happy to give him this small testimony of my regard.’ Such spontaneous testimonies of approbation from such men, without any personal acquaintance with me, are truly valuable and encouraging.”

And our commentator had doubts whether this should not be omitted altogether!

Under June, 1784, we find a whole paragraph taken from Boswell's controversy with Miss Seward, which is in a different style, and concludes with this inartistic sentence, suited to a controversial paper in the magazine where it appeared.

“What are we to think of the scraps of letters between her and Mr. Hayley impolitely attempting to undermine the noble pedestal on which public opinion has placed Dr. Johnson?”

This joins but clumsily with Boswell's own text, “On Sunday, June 27, I found him rather better.”

Under date of June, 1781, a paragraph beginning, “The following letters were written at this time by Johnson to Miss Reynolds,” &c., with two letters, from a note of Malone's, are inserted in the text.

In the notice of the “Lives of the Poets,” Boswell says, “That he, however, had a good deal of trouble, and some anxiety, in carrying on the work, we see from a series of letters to Mr. Nichols, the printer, whose variety of literary inquiry and obliging disposition rendered him useful to Johnson. Mr. Steevens appears, from the papers in his possession,” &c. A note, and a number of extracts from these letters, are subjoined. Mr. Croker inserts these in the text. But, as at the close there is a passage which would come in awkwardly, “See several more in the ‘Gentleman's Magazine.’ The Editor of the Miscellany,” &c., he consigns *that* to a note.

He is not quite candid, too, as to certain discoveries he has made, and special privileges of information which were accorded to him. Of Johnson's long letter to the King's Librarian, Dr. Barnard, Mr. Boswell has said:—“I wished much to have

gratified my readers with the perusal of this letter, and have reason to think that his Majesty would have been graciously pleased to permit its publication; but Mr. Barnard, to whom I applied, declined it 'on his own account.'—BOSWELL. "I was more fortunate, and this letter will be found under its proper date," says Mr. Croker.

Who would not suppose from this, that by special favour, not accorded to Boswell, Mr. Croker was allowed to publish it? The document in question is to be found in a very accessible "Report," and also in the still more accessible pages of the "Gentleman's Magazine."

But, after all these faults—faults of disfigurement—Croker's "Boswell" remains a most remarkable monument of industry, research, and information of a very interesting kind. He himself possessed great stores of curious learning, and, from long practice in reviewing the important memoirs that came out in his time, had acquired the knowledge of much secret political history, as it is called. Where his prejudices did not disturb him, he deals with these matters in a very interesting way. He was, however, but too often under the influence of a *parti pris*. But his signal advantage was the favour he enjoyed of communication with personages who had actually known or who were indirectly connected with Johnson, while his position as a political *littérateur* of eminence, with

the command of a great review, opened to him large stores of private papers. No one seems to have been more universally assisted or to have been so successful in accumulating curious details, important letters, and the like.

Some fifty years ago it was even still possible to meet with survivors of the Johnsonian era, and Mr. Croker was fortunate enough to be just in time to collect valuable information, for giving colour and flavour to his work. Of these persons the most important was Lord Stowell, the "Dr. Scott of the Commons" of Boswell, Mr. Fitzherbert, Mr. Cholmondeley, and the evergreen Miss Monkton, later Lady Cork, who survived till 1840; with the venerable Dr. Routh, of Magdalen, the last who had seen Johnson ascending the steps of one of the colleges at Oxford—nay, had even been shown by a contemporary of Addison's the rooms the latter had occupied. This venerable "Don" died so lately as the year 1855. Mr. Croker had spoken with Miss Langton and Lady Keith, Mrs. Thrale's daughter, later the Countess Flahault; and, according to Lord Macaulay, had been refused papers by Miss Burney, then Madame D'Arblay. He had also met one of the Miss Hornecks whom Goldsmith so admired. These certainly were special advantages, and, by an industrious, pushing character, likely to be turned to the best profit.

His preface, in which he gives a detailed account of the personages who assisted him—these links with Johnson times—is a most entertaining “piece,” and has a strange interest from the names with which it is dotted, now, with Mr. Croker himself, passed away. Our obligations to him, therefore, are of the most substantial kind. The more reason that his work should be cleared of its remaining blemishes.



## CHAPTER III.

MACAULAY AND CROKER.

WE now approach the well-known encounter between these two writers which was so unbecoming—it must be said—an episode in the lives of both. There have been many combats of the kind; but few so bitter or offering so singular a display of malevolent and unchristian feeling. It seems strange that the matter was not referred to the mode of arbitration then fashionable. It must be said the essayist appears to have been the party the most, or rather the one, to blame. It may have been that like the English officer at Paris after Waterloo—who took on himself to seek a quarrel with a professional duellist, long the pest of society, for the purpose of destroying him—Macaulay may have wished to chastise a wantonly aggressive personage. But on both sides a more curious display of roused malignant passions, nursed and inflamed for years, could not be matched. I dwell on it more particularly, because it opens up many interesting points of discussion connected with Johnson.

The immediate cause of quarrel, as is well known,

was an encounter in the House of Commons on the Reform Bill. The merits of Macaulay's speech seem to have been a little exaggerated; as there were others during the debates who fell on the unhappy Croker, and who equally deserved the hackneyed praise of "making one of the best, if not the best, speeches they had ever heard." That strange taste for perversion of facts, which seemed to be half constitutional, half fostered by habit and prejudice, had led him into an ingeniously distorted account of the differences between Charles I. and his Parliament—which appeared to be damaging—none of the Whigs having sufficient historical "baggage" to correct him. It was the late Lord Derby, primed by Sir John Hobhouse, that undertook to expose him with this result:—

"Mr. Croker," says Sir D. le Marchant, "whose assurance was proverbial, at first listened to him with apparent indifference; but as he proceeded in his attack, supported by immense cheering from a very large majority of the House, Mr. Croker's courage gave way—he became very pale, and pulled his hat over his brows. Lord Althorp thought that he was going to faint, and he did not recover himself the whole night. I am bound in candour to confess that Lord Althorp, who followed Mr. Croker in the debate on the preceding night, missed the credit of this victory from his imperfect historical recollections, as did

many of the other Whigs; and it was Sir John Hobhouse (afterwards Lord Broughton) to whom Mr. Stanley owed the information which he turned to such good account."

This shows that our critic lived in this atmosphere of casuistry. He was everywhere, in his critical labours as in his speeches, of the same temper. But what shall be said of Macaulay, who, exulting in his sense of victory, which in another might tend to moderation or pity, is only thinking of further humiliation for his foe. "That impudent leering Croker congratulated the House on the proof which I had given of my readiness. He was afraid, he said, that I had been silent so long on account of the many allusions which had been made to Calne. Now that I had risen again he hoped that they should hear me often. *See whether I do not dust that varlet's jacket for him in the next number of the Blue and Yellow. I detest him more than cold boiled veal.*" He was, moreover, "a bad, a very bad man: a scandal to politics and letters." He had "beaten him black and blue." When the article appeared he announced triumphantly that he had "*smashed his Book.*" It is certainly extraordinary that one so amiable in his family relations should have not exhibited the mode of hostility in favour with magnanimous minds, viz., contemptuous silence. But in Mr. Trevelyan's interesting records there are many significant traits

and incidents which seem to have been passed by in the general acclaim, and which betoken a rather Crokerish feeling towards those who opposed or crossed him in his literary path.

But not content with the having "smashed" this book, the essayist returned to the charge in his review of Madame D'Arblay's "Diary":—"There was no want of low minds and bad hearts in the generation which witnessed her first appearance. There was the envious Kenrick and the savage Wolcot, the asp George Stevens, and the polecat John Williams. It did not, however, occur to them to search the parish register of Lynn, in order that they might be able to twit a lady with having concealed her age. That truly chivalrous exploit was reserved *for a bad writer of our own time, whose spite she had provoked by not furnishing him with materials for a worthless edition of Boswell's Life of Johnson, some sheets of which our readers have doubtless seen round parcels of better books.*"

It is painful to read these words, which seem to be less expressive of his dislike—even hatred—"of a bad writer," than of a man that was odious to him. When in the year 1843 the Reviewer was brought before the public in connection with the notorious Lord Hertford's will, and other enemies were enjoying the spectacle of the ferocious and pitiless denouncer of all trespasses against morals and

decorum, being convicted of having tolerated or favoured his patron's excesses, the essayist seemed to have found special delight in the exposure. Mr. Trevelyan tells us gravely, "In a singularly powerful letter, written as late as 1843, he (Macaulay) recites in detail certain unsavoury portions of that gentleman's private life which were not only part of the stock-gossip of every bow-window in St. James's Street, but which had been brought into the light of day in the course either of parliamentary or judicial investigations. After illustrating these transactions with evidence which proved that he did not take up an antipathy on hearsay, Macaulay comments on them in such terms as clearly indicate that his animosity to Croker arose from incompatibility of moral sentiments, and not of political opinions."—Vol. i. p. 124. Some twenty years later came the return blow for the critique on Boswell, which, severe as it was, was studiously moderate in style. Indeed, the old truculent "tomahawking" had gone out. But though laboured, and coloured with animosity, the objections were considered to be fairly sustained.

We shall examine in what fashion Mr. Macaulay proceeded to "dust this varlet's jacket," and "beat him "black and blue." In this discussion, though Macaulay was wantonly savage, and used vituperations totally disproportionated to the offences he censured, he is found right almost *in omnibus*; and

the spectacle of casuistry offered by the raging and writhing victim in his own defence, certainly cannot be matched. So transparent are his excuses, that it can only be charitably supposed that he was blinded by his prejudices in his own favour, and resentment at the treatment he experienced.

In "Blackwood's Magazine" appeared the reply to Macaulay's attacks, written in the character of an impartial friend vindicating his friend, but well known to have been Mr. Croker's own work. Through some curious infatuation, Macaulay's attack, and this presumed defence, are prefixed to all the recent editions; so that the reader can see the strength of the one and the feebleness of the other.

Macaulay objects:—

"Mr. Croker says, that at the commencement of the INTIMACY between Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale, IN 1765, the lady was 25 years old."

Here is the reply:—

"Why, Mr. Croker says no such thing. He says, 'Mrs. Thrale was 25 years of age when the *acquaintance* commenced,' but *he* does not say *when* it commenced, nor when it became *intimacy*. It is *Mr. Boswell* who states that in 1765 Mr. Johnson was introduced into the family of Mrs. Thrale; but in the very next page we find Mrs. Thrale herself stating that the *acquaintance* began in 1764, and that the more strict intimacy might be dated from 1766. So that the discrepancy of two or three years which, by a *double falsification* of Mr. Croker's words, the Reviewer attributes to him, belongs really to Mr. Boswell and Mrs. Thrale themselves."

But still it will be seen, Croker's calculation, "twenty-five years old," must be based on either

Boswell's or Mrs. Thrale's statement. Accepting even this discrepancy, he gives no date himself. This will be enough to support Macaulay's next argument, for she would have been either twenty-four or twenty-five. It may be added that Macaulay did not impute any such "discrepancy" as Croker mentions to him.

Macaulay goes on :—

"In another place he says that Mrs. Thrale's 35th year coincided with Johnson's 70th. Johnson was born in 1709 ; if, therefore, Mrs. Thrale's 35th coincided with Johnson's 70th, she could have been but 21 years old in 1765."

The answer :—

"Mr. Croker states, that from a passage in one of Johnson's letters, '*he suspects,*' and '*it may be surmised,*' that Mrs. Thrale's 35th and Johnson's 70th years coincided.' Is it not an absolute misrepresentation to call an opinion, advanced in the cautious terms of *surmise* and *suspicion*, as a *statement of a fact* ?"

Macaulay adds :—

"We will not decide between them ; we will only say that the reason he gives for thinking that Mrs. Thrale was exactly 35 years old when Johnson was 70, appears to us utterly frivolous."

Croker in reply :—

"Mr. Croker's reason is this : Mrs. Thrale had offended Johnson, by supposing him to be 72 when he was only 70. Of this Johnson complains, at first somewhat seriously, but he afterwards gaily adds, '*If you try to plague me (on the subject of age), I shall tell you that life begins to decline at 35.*' Mr. Croker's note on this passage, which the Reviewer has misrepresented as an *assertion*, is, '*It may be surmised, that Mrs. Thrale, at her last birthday, was 35.*' *Surmise* appears to be too dubious an expression. The meaning seems indisputable ; and if this be not the point of Johnson's retort, what is it ?"

Still, our commentator's "*surmise*" or "*suspicion*"

can only be dealt with *quantum valeat*, and it will not fit with Boswell's or Mrs. Thrale's date, thus supporting Macaulay's objection. Croker, he shows, does not agree with himself, and that was his point.

So having suspected or surmised that Mrs. Thrale was thirty-five when Johnson was seventy, she was certainly either twenty-four or twenty-six, if Croker adopts Thrale's or Boswell's "commencement of the acquaintance—if his own, twenty-one—but there is no room for twenty-five.

But now we turn to his later note on the text, and read with wonder the cool admission:—"She was about twenty-four or twenty-five years of age when the acquaintance commenced. At the time of my first edition I was unable to ascertain precisely Mrs. Piozzi's age—but a subsequent publication named *Piozziana*, fixes her birth on her own authority to the 16th January, 1740; yet even that is not quite conclusive, for she calls it 1740 *old style*, that is, 1741. I must now, of course, adopt, though not without some doubt, the lady's reckoning. See *Quarterly Review*, vol. xlix. p. 252."

So all the "surmises," "suspicions," comparisons with Johnson's age are *admittedly* unsound. Why not handsomely dismiss them? Even the objection of the "old style" being "not conclusive," is unintelligible. It may be added that, in Mr. Hayward's book (p. 40) "Mr. Salusbury, referring to a china



bowl in his possession, says: 'The slip of paper now in it is in my father's handwriting, and copied, I have heard him say, from the original slip, which was worn out by age and fingering. The exact words are "In this bason was baptised Hester Lynch Salusbury, 16th Jan. 1740-41 old style, at Bodville in Carnarvonshire."'"

We go on:—

"But this is not all: Mr. Croker, in another place, assigns the year 1777 as the date of the complimentary lines which Johnson made on Mrs. Thrale's 35th birthday. If this date be correct, Mrs. Thrale must have been born in 1742, and could have been only 23 when her acquaintance with Johnson commenced."

This was indeed being "spitted like larks." Thus answered:—

"Mr. Croker does no such thing. He inserts the complimentary lines under the year 1777, because he must needs place them somewhere, and, in the doubt of two or three years, which, as I have already shown, may exist between Mr. Boswell's account and Mrs. Thrale's own, he placed them under 1777; but, so far from positively assigning them to that particular year, he cautiously premises, '*It was about this time* that these verses were written;' and he distinctly states, in two other notes, that he *doubts* whether that was the precise date. Here again, therefore, his Reviewer is dishonest. 'Two of Mr. Croker's three statements must be false.' Mr. Croker has made but *one statement*, and *that is not impugned*; the two discrepancies belong to Mr. Boswell and Mrs. Thrale, and the falsehood—to the Reviewer."

Under 1777, because he must needs place them somewhere (!). But a reviewer could not discover this *secret* reason. Macaulay is entirely justified and his *manes* propitiated by the verses in later editions being *put back* to the year 1776.

A discussion on Lord Mansfield's age. Macaulay says :—

“Mr. Croker informs his readers, that Lord Mansfield survived Johnson full ten years. Lord Mansfield survived Dr. Johnson just eight years and a quarter.”

The answer is bewildering :—

“The Reviewer is right. Dr. Johnson died in 1784, and Lord Mansfield in 1793. But the occasion on which Mr. Croker used the inaccurate colloquial phrase of *full ten years*, makes the inaccuracy of no consequence at all. He is noticing an anecdote of a gentleman's having stated that he called on Dr. Johnson soon after Lord Mansfield's death, and that Johnson said, ‘Ah, sir, *there* was little learning, and less virtue.’ This cruel anecdote Mr. Croker's natural indignation refutes from his general recollection, and without waiting to consult the printed obituaries, he exclaims, ‘It cannot be true, for Lord Mansfield survived Johnson *full ten years*!’ whereas he ought to have said, ‘It cannot be true, because Lord Mansfield survived Johnson “eight years and three months;”’ or, what would have been still more accurate, ‘eight years, three months, and seven days!’”

Macaulay's point is the attempted accuracy of the word “*full*” which certainly means “not less than;” “about” might have fairly passed.

“Mr. Croker tells us that the great Marquess of Montrose was beheaded at Edinburgh in 1650. There is not a forward boy in any school in England who does not know that the Marquess was *hanged*. The account of the execution is one of the finest passages in Lord Clarendon's history. We can scarcely suppose that Mr. Croker has never read the passage; and yet we can scarcely suppose that any one who has ever perused so noble and pathetic a story can have utterly forgotten all its most striking circumstances.”

It is almost enough to give the following without comment. But this may be said, that in common *parlance* and in common sense, “beheading” and

“hanging” are used to describe the particular mode of *taking away life*. No one would think of saying that a person had been executed by the axe, who had been hanged and then had his head severed from his body.

“We really almost suspect that the *Reviewer* himself has not read the passage to which he refers, or he could hardly have accused Mr. Croker of showing—by having said that Montrose was ‘*beheaded*,’ when the *Reviewer* thinks he should have said ‘*hanged*’—that he had forgotten the most ‘*striking passage*’ of Clarendon’s noble ‘*account of the execution*.’ For it is not on the *execution* itself that Lord Clarendon dwells with the most pathos and effect, but on the previous indignities at and after his trial, which Montrose so magnanimously endured. Clarendon, with scrupulous delicacy, avoids *all mention of the peculiar mode of death*, and is wholly silent as to any of the circumstances of the *execution*, leaving the reader’s imagination to supply, from the terms of the sentence, the odious details; but the *Reviewer*, if he had really known or felt the true pathos of the story, would have remembered that the sentence was, that the Marquess should be *hanged and beheaded*, and that his *head* should ‘be stuck on the Tolbooth of Edinburgh;’ and it was this very circumstance of the *beheading*, which excited in Montrose that burst of eloquence which is the *most striking* beauty of the whole of the ‘noble and pathetic story.’ ‘I am prouder,’ said he to his persecutors, ‘to have *my head* set upon the place it is appointed to be, than I should be to have my picture hung in the King’s bedchamber!’ And this—the *beheading*—is the incident which the *Reviewer* imagines that Mr. Croker may have ‘*forgotten*,’ because he does tell us that Montrose was *beheaded*, when he should have drily told us he was *hanged*.”

Macaulay goes on:—

“‘Nothing,’ says Mr. Croker, ‘can be more unfounded than the assertion that Byng fell a martyr to political party. By a strange coincidence of circumstances it happened that there was a total change of administration between his condemnation and death, so that one party presided at his trial, and another at his execution. There can be no stronger proof that he was not a political martyr.’ Now, what will our readers think of this writer, when we assure them that this statement, so confidently made respecting events so notorious, is absolutely

untrue ! One and the same administration was in office when the court-martial on Byng commenced its sittings, through the whole trial, at the condemnation and at the execution. In the month of November, 1756, the Duke of Newcastle and Lord Hardwicke resigned ; the Duke of Devonshire became first Lord of the Treasury, and Mr. Pitt, Secretary of State. This administration lasted till the month of April, 1757. Byng's court-martial began to sit on the 28th of December, 1756. He was shot on the 14th March, 1757. There is something at once diverting and provoking in the cool and authoritative manner in which Mr. Croker makes these random assertions."

Mr. Croker answers (some sentences not to the point being omitted):—

"This contradiction to Mr. Croker, 'so confidently made with respect to events so notorious,' is absolutely untrue ! But so it is. The Reviewer catches at what may be a verbal inaccuracy (I doubt whether it be one, but at worst it is no more), and is himself guilty of the most direct and substantial falsehood. Of all the audacities of which this Reviewer has been guilty, this is the greatest, not merely because it is the most important as an historical question, but because it is an instance of—to use his own expression—'the most *scandalous inaccuracy*.' The question between Mr. Croker and the Reviewer is this,—whether *one* Ministry did not *prosecute* Byng, and a *succeeding* Ministry *execute* him ! Mr. Croker says *ay*—the Reviewer says *no*. Byng's action was in May, 1756, at which time the Duke of Newcastle was Minister, and Mr. Pitt and Lord Temple in violent opposition ; and when the account of the action arrived in England, 'the Ministers' (see Campbell's *Lives of the Admirals*)—'the *Ministers* determined to turn, if possible, the popular clamour and indignation from *themselves*, upon the Admiral.' And, again, 'the hired writers in the pay of the *Ministry* were set to work to censure his conduct in the most violent and inflammatory manner.' And, again, 'The popular clamour and indignation were so extremely violent that *Ministers* were under the necessity of making known *their intention to try Byng*. On the 26th July, Byng arrived at Portsmouth, and was committed to *close custody*. . . .

" 'The Ministers,' says Charnock (*Naval Biography*, Vol. iv. p. 159), 'treated him like a criminal *already condemned*.'

"In these circumstances, and while Byng was on the brink of his trial about the 20th November, 1756, his inveterate enemies, the *Ministers*, resigned, and a total change of administration took place.

The new administration, however, resolved to execute the intentions of the former—the proceedings instituted against Byng by the Duke of Newcastle's administration were followed up by Mr. Pitt's; and the imprisonment of Byng, which was ordered by Lord Anson, was terminated by his execution, the warrant for which was signed by Lord Temple, six months after! Now, if Mr. Croker had been writing history, or even a review, he probably might not have said that 'the change of Ministers took place between the *condemnation* and death,' if by *condemnation* the actual *sentence* of the court were to be understood. Certainly the actual trial happened to be held a few days after the accession of the new Ministry, but the prosecution—the alleged prosecution—the *official condemnation*—the indictment, if I may borrow the common law expression—the collection of the evidence in support of it—and every step preparatory to the actual swearing of the court, were all perpetrated under the auspices of the old Ministry.

"After this, nobody can have any doubt in deciding which speaks the historic truth—he, certainly, who represents *one* set of Ministers as conducting the prosecution, and the *other* as ordering the execution.

"Mr. Croker, on this occasion, as on many others, has looked to the *spirit* of the proceeding, as well as to the *letter*—to the *design* as well as the *date*—and has contributed to trace historic truth by the motives and causes of events, rather than by the day of the month on which the events happen to explode.—His justification and the refutation of his Reviewer are complete!"

That the words "between his condemnation and his death," mean "between the determination to bring him to trial and his death," seems the most curious quibble, or rather attempt at a quibble. It is simply a device thought of *après coup*, and is actually disposed of by his own words in the same sentence, "so that one party presided at his *trial*, and another at his execution." Yet notwithstanding these elaborate vindications, we find the word *withdrawn* and "accusation" substituted for "condemnation."

“Nothing can be *more* unfounded than the assertion that Byng was a martyr to ‘*political persecution.*’ It is impossible to read the trial without being convinced that he had misconducted himself; and the extraordinary proceedings in both Houses of Parliament subsequent to his trial, prove, at once, the zeal of his friends to invalidate the finding of the court-martial, and the absence of any reason for doing so. By a strange coincidence of circumstances, it happened that there was a total change of ministry between the *accusation* and the sentence, so that one party prepared the trial and the other directed the execution: there can be no stronger proof that he was not a *political* martyr. See this subject treated at large in the *Quarterly Review* for April, 1822—1831. But though legally, and, I believe, justly convicted, it is likely that he would have been pardoned had not popular fury ran so high. The *public* had from the first condemned the unhappy admiral, and anticipated his fate. Thus Lloyd writes on the 30th September, 1756, three months before the change of ministry, and *six months before Byng’s execution*:—

‘So *ministers* of basest tricks,  
I love a fling at politics;  
Amuse the nation’s court and king,  
By breaking F[ow]ke and hanging Byng.’

“And in the *London Magazine* for the same month,

in a long vituperative poem, addressed to Byng, are these lines :—

‘ An injured nation must be satisfied ;  
To public execution thou must go,  
A public spectacle of shame and woe.’ ”

These latter passages are prompted by the old feeling, and are *l'adresse* of his enemy. I have found, however, that this theory was a favourite hobby of the author's, introduced into many articles in the *Quarterly Review*, e. g., into that on the Memoirs of Walpole, those of Lord Waldegrave, and others of the kind, in which he presses the same fallacy, *viz.*, that it was determined to bring Byng to trial by one set of ministers, but that his actual trial and execution took place under another. The verses quoted prove nothing except that some of the people wished him to be hanged. It would have been more candid to have frankly admitted that the words “one party presided at his trial”—though, indeed, it is forcing the meaning of words a good deal—were a slip of the memory or pen for,—“prepared to bring him to trial.” But, after all, it is no injustice to such a partisan as Mr. Croker to assume that there was purpose in his statement, and that in this persistent recurrence to this topic there was an intention to white-wash Mr. Pitt, who was in the second Ministry, showing that he *inherited* the case from his predecessors.

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Next as to Johnson's remark on Gibbon :—

“But we must proceed. These volumes contain mistakes more gross, if possible, than any we have yet mentioned. Boswell has recorded some observations made by Johnson on the changes which took place in Gibbon's religious opinions. ‘It is said,’ cried the Doctor, laughing, ‘that he has been a Mahometan.’ ‘This sarcasm,’ says the editor, ‘probably alludes to the tenderness with which Gibbon's malevolence to Christianity induced him to treat Mahometanism in his History.’ Now, the sarcasm was uttered in 1776; and that part of the History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire which relates to Mahometanism was not published till 1788, twelve years after the date of this conversation, and nearly four years after the death of Johnson.”

The answer :—

“What! does the Reviewer doubt that Mr. Croker is right, and that Gibbon was the person intended?

“Certainly not. He adopts, without acknowledgement, Mr. Croker's interpretation, but then turns round and says, ‘You have given a bad reason for a just conclusion.’ Then why does the Reviewer not give a better, and explain why he adopts Mr. Croker's opinion, if he is not satisfied with Mr. Croker's reason? The fact is, the poor creature is at his *skeleton* work again. He found that the origin of Mahometanism which sprung up about the year 600, could not be chronologically included in the first volume of Gibbon, which ends about the year 300. And he kindly informs Mr. Croker that Gibbon's account of Mahometanism was not published till after Johnson's death; but the Reviewer chooses to forget that, in every page of his *first* volume as of his last, Gibbon takes or makes opportunities of sneering at and depreciating Christianity; while, on the other hand, he shows everywhere remarkable ‘tenderness’ for Paganism and Mahometanism.

“These insinuations and innuendos are to be found *all through* the work, and are indeed the great peculiarity of his style.

“It is evident, too, from the concluding part of Mr. Croker's note, *which the Reviewer has suppressed*, that this was his meaning; for Mr. Croker adds, ‘*something of this sort*’ must have been in Johnson's mind on this occasion.’ If Mr. Croker had meant to allude to the *professed* history of Mahometanism, published in Gibbon's latter volumes, he could not have spoken dubiously about it, as ‘*something of this sort*,’ for *there* the bias is clear and certain. It is therefore evident that Mr.



Croker meant to allude to Gibbon's numerous *invections* against Christianity in the first volumes ; and if Johnson did *not* mean 'something of this sort,' I wish the Reviewer would tell us what he meant."

But there is more to come. Mr. Croker, as we have seen, on consideration being inclined to suspect some earlier infidelity at Oxford, connected, too, with Arabic, "To what, then, it has been asked, could Johnson allude?" Macaulay proceeded to anticipate Croker's question. "Possibly to some anecdote or conversation of which all trace is lost. One conjecture may be offered, though with diffidence. Gibbon tells us in his *Memoirs* that at Oxford he took a fancy for studying Arabic, and was prevented from doing so by the remonstrances of his tutor. Soon after this, the young man fell in with Bossuet's controversial writings and was speedily converted by them to the Roman Catholic Faith. The apostacy of a gentleman commoner would, of course, be for a time the chief subject of conversation in the common rooms of Magdalen. His whim about Arabic learning would naturally be mentioned, and would give occasion to some jokes about the probability of his turning Mussulman. If such jokes were made, Johnson, who frequently visited Oxford, was very likely to hear of them."

By a strange coincidence, Mr. Croker "is inclined to suspect" the same thing. But the irrefragable Macaulay was not to be thus disposed of. He re-

turned to the charge, and crushed anew his already prostrate foe. "A defence of this blunder," he says, was attempted. That the celebrated chapters in which Gibbon has traced the progress of Mahomedanism were not written in 1776 could not be denied. But it was confidently asserted that his partiality to Mahomedanism appeared in his first volume. This assertion is untrue; no passage which can by any act be construed into the faintest indication of the faintest partiality for Mahomedanism has been quoted, or ever will be quoted, from the first volume of the "History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire." What a terrible enemy to encounter—no loose or reckless statement could pass with him! "This assertion is untrue"—words deliberately chosen, and the most offensive he could choose, it would almost seem, to mark his belief that the man, in Johnson's words, "lied, and knew that he lied." The hapless commentator had the degradation of putting under his hand an admission that this was so, but in a note in a later edition we find this extraordinary *volte-face*: "As there can be no doubt that Gibbon and his History are the author and the work here alluded to, I once thought that some sceptical expressions in the celebrated fifteenth and sixteenth chapters might have prompted this sarcasm, but I am now inclined to suspect that it may have referred to some Oxford rumours of earlier infidelity.

Gibbon, in his *Memoirs*, confesses that the erratic course of study, which finally led to his conversion to Popery, began at Oxford by a turn towards 'oriental learning and an inclination to study Arabic.' 'His tutor,' he adds, 'discouraged this childish fancy.' He complains, too, of the invidious *whispers* which were afterwards circulated in Oxford on the subject of his apostacy; and as we may be certain that Johnson did not speak without a meaning, I now believe that some whisper of this early inclination to Arabic learning and the language of the Koran may have reached Johnson and occasioned this sarcasm.—C. 1835."

Thus, still writhing at the recollection, he seems to seek some new device, and adroitly shifts the reference from the word "Mahometan" to the last word of the sentence, so that the word "infidelity" which then occurs may be brought in. The disingenuousness of this seems extraordinary, for the point of Macaulay's remarks, as well as of Croker's, was connected with this word "Mahometan."

On the publication of the *Vicar of Wakefield* :—

"It was in the year 1761," says Mr. Croker, "that Goldsmith published his *Vicar of Wakefield*." This leads the editor to observe a more serious inaccuracy of Mrs. Piozzi than Mr. Boswell notices, when he says Johnson left her table to go and sell the *Vicar of Wakefield* for Goldsmith. Now, Dr. Johnson was not acquainted with the *Thrales* till 1765, four years after the book had been published.' Mr. Croker, in reprehending the fancied inaccuracy of Mrs. Thrale, has himself shown a degree of inaccuracy, or, to speak more properly, a degree of ignorance

hardly credible. The "Traveller" was not published till 1765; and it is a fact as notorious as any in literary history, that the "Vicar of Wakefield," though written before the "Traveller," was published after it. It is a fact which Mr. Croker may find in any common "Life of Goldsmith"; in that written by Mr. Chalmers, for example. It is a fact which, as Boswell tells us, was distinctly stated by Johnson, in a conversation with Sir Joshua Reynolds. It is, therefore, quite possible and probable, that the celebrated scene of the landlady, the sheriff's-officer, and the bottle of Madeira, may have taken place in 1765. Now, Mrs. Thrale expressly says that it was near the beginning of her acquaintance with Johnson, in 1765, or, at all events, not later than 1766, that he left her table to succour his friend. Her accuracy is therefore completely vindicated."

#### The answer :—

"Here again the Reviewer, in attempting to correct a verbal inaccuracy, displays 'the error or the ignorance' of which he unjustly accuses Mr. Croker. It would, indeed, have been more accurate if Mr. Croker had said that Goldsmith had, in 1761, '*sold the work to the publisher*,' for it was not actually published to the world till after the 'Traveller'; but the fact as to the *publication* has nothing to do with the point in question, which is the time when Goldsmith *sold* the work, and whether Johnson could have left Thrale's table to sell it for him,—in other words, whether the sale took place prior to 1765. Mr. Croker again says *ay*—the Reviewer says *no*—and the Reviewer is again decidedly in the wrong, and Mr. Croker is clearly right, according to the very authority to which the Reviewer refers us. Chalmers tells us, indeed, that the novel was published after the poem; but he also tells us, to the utter discomfiture of the Reviewer, that '*the novel was sold, and the money paid for it, some time before!*' So that the sale took place, even according to the Reviewer's own admission, *before* 1765.

"The Reviewer states that the 'Traveller' was not *published* till 1765; but even in this fact he is wrong. The 'Traveller' was published in 1764; and if he will open the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1764, he will find extracts in it from that poem. This fact corroborates Mr. Croker's inference; Mrs. Piozzi had said that 'Johnson was called away from her table *either* in 1765 or 1766, to sell the novel.' Mr. Croker says this must be inaccurate, because the book was sold long before that date. Now it is proved that it was sold before the publication of the 'Traveller,' and it is also proved that the 'Traveller' was published in

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1764; and, finally, the Reviewer's *assertion*, that 'it is quite *possible* and *probable* that the sale took place in 1765,' is thus shown to be 'a *monstrous blunder.*' "

Mr. Macaulay—in his published *Essays*—put the case very forcibly, and fairly acknowledged that "a slight inaccuracy, immaterial to the argument, has been removed." This mistake, so handsomely acknowledged, was no more than putting the publication of the *Traveller* in the year 1765 instead of 1764. In the *Essays* he thus summarises his objection: "In the first place Johnson became acquainted with the *Thrales* not in 1765 but in 1764, and during the last weeks of 1764 dined with them every Thursday, as written in Mrs. Piozzi's '*Anecdotes.*' In the second place, Goldsmith published his '*Vicar of Wakefield*' not in 1761 but in 1766." Croker's justification on this is more startling than any we have had as yet. The argument to prove Mrs. *Thrale's* "inaccuracy" is that—as the "*Vicar*" was published in 1761, and Johnson, who only came to know the *Thrales* some years, could not have left their table to be shown the MS.—we must substitute, as he invites us, "sold the work to the publisher" for "published." Mrs. Piozzi, according to him, would be liable to the same charge of inaccuracy, as Johnson could not, to "sell the work to a publisher" in 1761, have left the table of people he did not know till 1764. Croker's "point" was the in-

accurate date, 1761. Macaulay was arguing *ad hominem*, as he was fond of doing, not on the general question to which Mr. Croker shifts the matter. We turn, however, to later editions to see what the effect of the discussion has been. "There is a more serious objection to Mrs. Piozzi's story. She says, Johnson left her table to go and sell the novel; *now the novel was sold in 1761*—four years before Johnson's acquaintance with the Thrales,—though it was not published till March, 1766. The *Traveller* appeared December, 1764. It may be doubtful whether the sale was not later than 1761, but it certainly was long before his acquaintance with the Thrales." Here, it will be seen, he adopts the new theory, the *sale* in 1761—an arbitrarily selected date apparently adopted on the moment, for which I can find no warrant. Mr. Forster, the best authority on Goldsmith, places the incident in 1764. The point about the publication of the *Traveller* in 1764, makes that year almost the same as 1765, for it was published on December 19.

The next :—

"The very page which contains this monstrous blunder contains another blunder, if possible more monstrous still. Sir Joseph Mawbey, a foolish member of Parliament, at whose speeches and whose pigsties the wits of Brookes's were, fifty years ago, in the habit of laughing most unmercifully, stated, on the authority of Garrick, that Johnson, while sitting in a coffee-house at Oxford, about the time of his doctor's degree, used some contemptuous expressions respecting Home's play and Macpherson's Ossian. 'Many men,' he said, 'many women, and many

children, might have written "Douglas." Mr. Croker conceives that he has detected an inaccuracy, and glories over poor Sir Joseph in a most characteristic manner. 'I have quoted this anecdote solely with the view of showing to how little credit hearsay anecdotes are in general entitled. Here is a story published by Sir Joseph Mawbey, a member of the House of Commons, and a person every way worthy of credit, who says he had it from Garrick. Now mark :—Johnson's visit to Oxford, about the time of his doctor's degree, was in 1754, the first time he had been there since he left the university. But Douglas was not acted till 1756, and Ossian not published till 1760. All, therefore, that is new in Sir Joseph Mawbey's story is false.' Assuredly we need not go far to find ample proof that a member of the House of Commons may commit a very gross error. Now mark, say we, in the language of Mr. Croker. The fact is, that Johnson took his *Master's* degree in 1754, and his *Doctor's* degree in 1775. In the spring of 1776 he paid a visit to Oxford, and at this visit a conversation respecting the works of Home and Macpherson might have taken place, and, in all probability, did take place. The only real objection to the story *Mr. Croker has missed*. Boswell states, apparently on the best authority, that as early at least as the year 1763, Johnson, in conversation with Blair, used the same expressions respecting Ossian which Sir Joseph represents him as having used respecting Douglas. Sir Joseph, or Garrick, confounded, we suspect, the two stories. But their error is venial, compared with that of Mr. Croker."

The answer :—

"Now, this is a tissue of misrepresentation. The words '*about the time of his doctor's degree*,' which the Reviewer attributes to Mr. Croker, are Sir Joseph Mawbey's own, and distinguished by Mr. Croker with marks of quotation (*omitted by the Reviewer*) to call the reader's attention to the mistake which Mr. Croker supposes Sir Joseph to have made as to the date of the anecdote.

"But, says the Reviewer, 'Mr. Croker has *missed* the only real objection to the story, namely, that Johnson had used, as early as 1763, respecting Ossian, the same expressions which Sir Joseph represents him as having used respecting Douglas.' This is really too bad—the Reviewer says that Mr. Croker has *missed*, because he himself has chosen to *suppress*! Mr. Croker's note *distinctly* states the very fact which he is accused of *missing*! 'Every one knows,' says Mr. Croker, 'that Dr. Johnson said of Ossian, that "many men, many women, and many children, might have written it;"' and Mr. Croker

concludes by inferring *exactly what the Reviewer himself does*, that Sir Joseph Mawbey was inaccurate in thus applying to *Douglas* what had been really said of *Ossian* !

“ But the Reviewer, in addition to suppressing Mr. Croker’s statement, blunders his own facts ; for he tells us that Johnson’s visit to Oxford, about the time of his doctor’s degree, was ‘in the spring of 1776.’ I beg to inform him it was in the latter end of May, 1775. (See ‘Boswell,’ v. iii. p. 254.) The matter is of no moment at all, but shows that the Reviewer falls into the very inaccuracies for which he arraigns Mr. Croker, and which he politely calls in this very instance ‘*scandalous* !’ ”

The words “*the time of his doctor’s degree*” not Croker’s but Sir J. Mawbey’s, and unjustly attributed to Croker ! Why, he bases his refutation of Sir J. Mawbey on these very words, which he adopts. “Now mark ! Johnson’s visit to Oxford, about the time of his doctor’s degree, was in 1754 ” (!). In the correction of Macaulay, about this visit, Croker must, in the hackneyed phrase, have been dreaming or dozing. Macaulay did not say that “his visit about the time of his doctor’s degree” was in 1776. He simply states that he took his doctor’s degree in 1775, and visited the University in the spring of 1776. The next, as it opens discussion and various opinions, may be passed over :—

“Boswell has preserved a poor epigram by Johnson, inscribed ‘ad Lauram parituram.’ Mr. Croker censures the poet for applying the word *puella* to a lady in Laura’s situation, and for talking of the beauty o’ Lucina. ‘Lucina,’ he says, ‘was never famed for her beauty.’ If Sir Robert Peel had seen this note, he possibly would again have refuted Mr. Croker’s criticisms, by an appeal to Horace. In the secular ode, Lucina is used as one of the names of Diana, and the beauty of Diana is extolled by all the most orthodox doctors of ancient mythology, from Homer, in his ‘*Odyssey*,’ to Claudian, in his ‘*Rape of Proserpine*.’ In



another ode Horace describes Diana as the goddess who assists the 'laborantes utero puellas.'"

The answer :—

"Euge! by this rule the Reviewer would prove that HECATE was famed for her *beauty*, for 'Hecate is one of the names of Diana, and the beauty of Diana,' and, *consequently, of Hecate*, 'is extolled by all the most orthodox doctors of heathen mythology.' Mr. Croker does not, as the Reviewer says he does, *censure* the poet for the application of the word *puella* to a lady in Laura's situation; but he says that the designation in the first line—which was proposed as a *thesis*—of the lady as *pulcherrima puella*, would lead us to expect anything rather than the turn which the latter lines of the epigram take, of representing her as about to lie-in. It needs not the authority either of Horace or the Reviewer to prove that '*puellæ*' will sometimes be found '*laborantes utero*.' But it will take more than the authority of the Reviewer to persuade me that Mr. Croker was wrong in saying that it seems a very strange mode of complimenting an English beauty."

The next is the rather piquant discussion about Prince Titi :—

"Johnson found in the library of a French lady, whom he visited during his short visit to Paris, some works which he regarded with great disdain. 'I looked,' says he, 'into the books in the lady's closet, and, in contempt, showed them to Mr. Thrale. Prince Titi—Bibliothèque des Fées—and other books.' 'The History of *Prince Titi*,' observes Mr. Croker, 'was said to be the autobiography of Frederick Prince of Wales, but was probably written by Ralph his secretary.' A more absurd note never was penned. The History of Prince Titi, to which Mr. Croker refers, whether written by Prince Frederick or by Ralph, *was certainly never published*. If Mr. Croker had taken the trouble to read with attention the very passage in Park's Royal and Noble Authors, which he cites as his authority, he would have seen that the manuscript was given up to the Government.

"Even if this memoir had been printed, it was not very likely to find its way into a French lady's bookcase. And would any man in his senses speak contemptuously of a French lady for having in her possession an English work so curious and interesting as a Life of Prince

Frederick, whether written by himself or by a confidential secretary, must have been ?

“The history at which Johnson laughed was a very proper companion to the *Bibliothèque des Fées*—a fairy tale about good Prince Titi, and naughty Prince Violent. Mr. Croker may find it in the *Magasin des Enfans*, the first French book which the little girls of England read to their governesses.”

The answer :—

“Here is a pretty round assertion of a matter of fact. ‘The History of Prince Titi, whether written by Prince Frederick or Ralph, *was certainly never published!*’ Now, unfortunately for this learned Reviewer, we have at this moment on our table the

HISTOIRE  
DU  
PRINCE TITI.  
—  
*A(llegorie) R(oyale).*

Paris : chez la Veuve Oissot, Quai de Conti, à la Croix d’Or.

And not only was it thus *published in Paris*, but it was translated into English, and *republished in London*, under the title of

THE  
· HISTORY  
OF  
PRINCE TITI,  
A  
*Royal Allegory.*  
Translated by a Lady.

What say you to *that*, Mr. Reviewer ? Is not this, to say the least of it, ‘a *scandalous inaccuracy*, and is not *he* who falls into such a mistake as this entitled to no confidence whatever !’

“But ‘if it has been printed, it was not likely to have found its way into the French lady’s bookcase.’ Why not?—it was written *in French*, printed *in Paris*, a very neat little volume, and is, moreover, just such a piece of fashionable secret history as would be sure to ‘find its way to a French lady’s bookcase.’

“But the *real fairy tale* would have been ‘a very proper companion

to the Bibliothèque des Fées.' Indeed! Pray has the Reviewer, then, ever seen that fairy tale in a *separate volume*? He seems to imply that it has been so published; and yet in the next sentence he tells us it is to be found in the *Magasin des Enfants*. But even here he is mistaken. The old fairy tale of Prince Titi is *not* to be found in the *Magasin des Enfants*; but a *rifacimento* of it is, and Madame de Beaumont was even blamed by some critics for having spoiled the *old story* by her *modern* version.

"We have no doubt in the world that Mr. Croker is quite right that the *Royal Allegory* of PRINCE TITI (the only volume with that title which we ever heard of) was on the lady's table, perhaps laid there purposely, in the expectation that her *English* visitors would think it a *literary curiosity*, which, indeed, it has proved to be; for Dr. Johnson seems not to have known what it was, and the Edinburgh Reviewer had never seen it, and, even now, so obstinately disbelieves the fact, that he ungratefully calls his informant very hard names.

"We add, as a point of literary history connected with this curious little volume, that it is possible that Ralph may have been preparing a *continuation* of it, which has been suppressed; but it is hardly possible that he could have had any share in the composition of the original volume, which was written before Ralph was in the Prince's confidence."

I confess that one might be inclined to take Croker's side here. "A more absurd note never was penned," is itself absurd, and ludicrously exaggerated. The words "Royal Allegory" might have warranted Mr. Croker's surmise; the question whether the book was given up to the Government or ever published at all, may be left to the literary antiquaries. But it was a just judgment on Croker for dragging in so far-fetched a comment. Dr. Johnson evidently considered it a fairy tale, and no need arose from the incident to enter on a display of Bibliographical lore—but indeed all Mr. Croker's notes on Johnson's French Diary are out of place.

But it is different with his rejoinder. Such "quibbling" is strange indeed. The point about the fairy tale "being published in a separate volume," which Macaulay does not say it was, is unworthy. But another is almost unique. Macaulay had said that the story of Prince Titi would be found in the *Magasin des Enfants*, and the reply is, "No; this is false: it is *not* to be found, because *that* is merely a version." Croker does not see that for Macaulay's argument this is enough—as Johnson had merely looked at the *titles* of the stories. More significant, however, is the last paragraph, where he is forced to own that Ralph *had* written a "Prince Titi" that may have been suppressed.

In his later edition, Croker retorts:—

"Now, every item, great and small, of this statement, is a blunder, or worse; some of which, as relating to a curious point of literary history, it seems worth while to correct. A book of this title *was* published in Paris, in 1735, and republished in 1752, under the title of "Histoire du Prince Titi, A(lle-gorie) R(oyale); and there is a copy of it in the Museum; and two English translations were advertised in the *Gentleman's* and the *London Magazines* for February, 1736, one of them with this title: 'The History of Prince Titi; a Royal Allegory, in Three Parts. With an Essay on Allegorical Writing and a *Key*. By the Honourable Mrs. Stanley, and sold by

E. Curl, price 3s." And it is mentioned as published by Park in his note (v. 354) on the passage quoted, which, it seems, Mr. Macaulay never read at all. Neither of the translations have I been able to find; but in the French work, amidst the puerility and nonsense of a very stupid fairy tale, it is clear enough, without any *key*, that by Prince Titi, King Ginguet, and Queen Tripasse, are meant Prince Frederick, George II., and Queen Caroline."

Mr. Macaulay says on the *Θνητοὶ Φίλοι* :—

"Mr. Croker has favoured us with some Greek of his own. 'At the altar,' says Dr. Johnson, 'I recommended my *θ. φ.*' 'These letters, says the editor, (which Dr. Strahan seems not to have understood,) probably mean *θνητοὶ φίλοι*—*departed friends.*' Johnson was not a first-rate Greek scholar; but he knew more Greek than most boys when they leave school; and no schoolboy could venture to use the word *θνητοὶ* in the sense which Mr. Croker ascribes to it without imminent danger of a flogging."

The answer :—

"The question is not here about classical Greek, but what Johnson meant by the *cipher* *θ. φ.* Mr. Croker's solution is not only ingenious, but, we think, absolutely certain: it means '*departed friends,*' beyond all doubt. See, in Dr. Strahan's book, under 'Easter Sunday, 1781,' an instance of the same kind—'I commended (*in prayer*) my *θ friends.*' The Reviewer, with notable caution, omits to tell us which of the derivatives of *Θάνατος* and *Θνησκω* he would have chosen; but we think with Mr. Croker that none was more likely to have occurred to Johnson's mind than *θνητοὶ*, because it is *good Greek*, and is moreover a word which we find him quoting on another occasion, in which he deplores the loss of a friend. *Good Greek*, we say, in defiance of the menaced flogging; for we have authority that we suppose even the Reviewer may bow to.

"What does the Reviewer think of the well-known passage in the *Supplices* of Euripides, cited even in Hederic ?—

'*Βᾶθι, καὶ ἀντίασον—,*

*Τέκνων τε θνητῶν κόμισσαι δέμας.*'—v. 275,

where *Τεκνων θητων* is used in the same sense as *Τεκνων θανοντων*, v. 12 and 85; *Τεκνων φθιμερων*, v. 60; and *Τεκνων κατανοντων*, v. 103!

“Suppose it had been—

*φιλων τε θητων.*

“The Edinburgh Reviewer seems inclined to revive his old reputation for *Greek*! He thought he was safely sneering at Mr. Croker, and he unexpectedly finds himself *correcting* Euripides.”

The question is a classical one. On Croker's defence Macaulay afterwards added a note:—“An attempt was made to vindicate this blunder by quoting a grossly corrupt passage from the *Ικετιδες* of Euripides. The true reading, as every scholar knows, is *τεκνων τεθνεωτων*. Indeed, without this emendation it would not be easy to construe the words, even if *Θνατων* could bear the meaning which Mr. Croker assigns to it.” I myself would offer a conjecture which seems more plausible. “My Θ. Φ. . .” was “my *θετα φιλα*,” *i.e.*, “my beloved *Tetty*,” the *t* becoming *th* as in Elizabeth, her name. The objection from “my *θ* friends” would be slight. As all Johnson's diaries were hard to decipher and transcribe, it ran probably “my *θ* friend.”

Another classical discussion:—

“Mr. Croker has also given us a specimen of his skill in translating Latin. Johnson wrote a note in which he consulted his friend, Dr. Lawrence, on the propriety of losing some blood. The note contains these words:—‘*Si per te licet, imperatur nuncio Holderum ad me deducere.*’ Johnson should rather have written ‘*imperatum est.*’ But the meaning of the words is perfectly clear. ‘If you say yes, the messenger has orders to bring Holder to me.’ Mr. Croker translates the words as follows: ‘If you consent, pray tell the messenger to bring

Holder to me.' If Mr. Croker is resolved to write on points of classical learning, we would advise him to begin by giving an hour every morning to our old friend Corderius."

The answer :—

"This is excellent! The Reviewer tells us that Johnson's Latin is incorrect, and then blames Mr. Croker for not having *correctly* translated that which the Reviewer thinks himself obliged to alter, in order to make it intelligible.

"Mr. Croker probably saw, as well as the Reviewer, that the phrase was inaccurate; but, instead of clumsily changing *imperatur* into *imperatum est*, (which, with all deference to the Reviewer, is much worse than the original,) he naturally supposes that *imperatur*, the indicative mood, is merely the transcriber's error of a *single letter* for either the imperative or the conditional moods, and translates it accordingly, without thinking it necessary to blazon the exploit in a long explanation,—

'How A's deposed, and Æ with pomp restored.'

"We venture to surmise, that, if Johnson's original note be in existence, it will be found that he wrote the word as Mr. Croker has translated it, and has therefore not deserved the ignominy of having his Latin *corrected* by an Edinburgh Reviewer; though, to be sure, *that* is no great insult, seeing that these omniscients appear inclined to correct the *Greek of Euripides*."

Mr. Croker virtually owns, as he is unfortunately obliged to do on all occasions, under the pitiless lash of his critic, that he was wrong.

We could have a great deal of entertainment from passages, when Mr. Croker, as it were, veiling his face, chose to put away certain words and passages too strong, as he thought, for chaste eyes and ears polite. If this had been done throughout, there might have been something respectable in a consistent principle, but it is carried out in the most capricious

way—words “quite shocking,” as our neighbours say, being retained, and others more harmless omitted. “It was thus that Mr. Macaulay talked of my capricious delicacy in omitting, in one or two instances, an indecent passage, and in substituting, in two or three others, for a coarse word, a more decorous equivalent; and he regrets particularly the suppression of ‘*a strong old-fashioned English word, familiar to all who read their Bibles.*’ It would be easy, I think, to refute Mr. Macaulay’s general principle, and to expose his equally sophistical and irreverent allusion to the Bible; but I shall here content myself with adducing the contrary authority of Sir Walter Scott, and the author of the Lives of Burke and Goldsmith, who, having, since my edition and Mr. Macaulay’s Review were published, occasion to quote some of those passages, adopted my reserve: and I am convinced that the public at large must approve of my endeavour to remove from this delightful book the few expressions that might offend female delicacy. I am sorry, however, to say, that one or two of Mr. Macaulay’s ‘*strong old-fashioned words*’ still remain, being so interwoven with the context, that I could not remove them without too much laceration.”

The vendetta between these two writers is truly painful and unbecoming in both. It is shocking to think of its being kept up unabated for some twenty years. When the editor of Boswell emerged from his



favourite Review, he dealt a return blow for the old one. Even in his carefully drawn index, we find under "B." "Blundering criticism, see Macaulay, T. B.;" and under "M." "Macaulay, Thomas Babington, his blundering criticisms on former editions."

## CHAPTER III.

### FALLACIES, "MARES'-NESTS," AND DELUSIONS.

THESE, strange to say, enter largely into Mr. Croker's speculation; and they are iterated through the work with such honest faith and determined language, and, it may be added, with such casuistry, that it is only when they are detached and examined, that the reader will see their absurdity.

#### § *That Johnson was out with the Rebels of '45.*

First must be considered one of the most amusing of Mr. Croker's delusions, which he seems to have dreamed and pored over until it became a sort of fixed morbid impression, not to be displaced by years, argument, or common sense. It was neither more nor less than a conviction that the grave, sensible Johnson had been "out in the '45!" The notion, on the face of it, seems far-fetched; but the absurdity lies in the extraordinary and extravagant grounds which have led a sober critic to adopt such a theory. These it will be interesting to consider for a few moments.

Speaking of Johnson's early struggles, Boswell makes the observation, "it is somewhat curious, that his literary career appears to have been almost totally suspended in the years 1745 and 1746, those years which were marked by a civil war in Great Britain, when a rash attempt was made to restore the House of Stuart to the throne. That he had a tenderness for that unfortunate House, is well known; and some may fancifully imagine, that a sympathetic anxiety impeded the exertion of his intellectual powers; but I am inclined to think that he was, during this time, sketching the outlines of his great philological work."

This, it will be seen, is a fanciful *reverie* on Boswell's part, and at most he supposes that Johnson's "sympathetic anxiety" was the cause of interruption. Here is the superstructure Mr. Croker at once begins to rear on this foundation:—

"In the 'Garrick Correspondence,' there is a letter from Gilbert Walmesley, dated Nov. 3, 1746, containing this passage: 'When you see Mr. Johnson, pray give my compliments, and tell him I esteem him as a great genius—*quite lost, both to himself and the world.*' Upon which the editor observes, '*Between the years 1743 and 1746, Johnson literally wrote nothing. The rebellion that was then raging perhaps inspired him with the hopes that attached to his political principles. He loved the House of Stuart, and in the*

*success of the Pretender might anticipate his own independence.* G. C. i. 45. It would be, I readily admit, too fanciful to believe that his literary powers were suspended by 'sympathetic anxiety;' *but it is little less so to imagine with Mr. Boswell, that he had employed these two years in contemplative preparation for his future Dictionary.* He must have had some means, however small, of subsistence. In the absence then of any other explanation, I cannot reject as altogether fanciful the idea of the *Garrick* editor, that he may have been diverted from his ordinary pursuits, not by 'sympathetic anxiety,' but by *some mere personal share* in the proceedings of the Jacobite party. We shall see hereafter that *he was privy to the concealment of at least one* of the Scotch Jacobites, who was hiding from justice for his share in the rebellion; may he not have been in some difficulties which might occasion his own absence or concealment? might this not have been the period of his temporary separation from his wife, if any such thing ever occurred? and finally, it is at least a curious coincidence, that Johnson's disappearance from the 'Gentleman's Magazine,' Feb. 1744, is *exactly contemporaneous* with the arrest of Col. Cecil, the Pretender's agent, and the general agitation into which the country was thrown by the king's message to Parliament announcing an invasion, and that he reappears in 1747, when the rebellion, and all its fatal conse-

quences, were over. I have a strong suspicion that from this period dates what I may call his morbid antipathy to the Scotch; and I also faintly suspect that a strong wish to recover an old letter out of the hands of Francis Stuart, one of his amanuenses in compiling the Dictionary, may have reference to this period."

This is indeed a "mare's-nest." Walmesley's remark, it is needless to say, does not refer to his being "in hiding," or otherwise affected by the rebellion. "If you see Mr. Johnson, tell him," &c., is a natural, careless form of expression; and his "being lost to himself and the world," means surely that he was consuming his talents as a bookseller's hack. The "Garrick editor," the garrulous, rambling Mr. Boaden, who flourished within living memory, knew no more than what he found in Boswell, and his gratuitous statement that Johnson wrote nothing from 1743 is quite wrong.

At starting, indeed, Mr. Croker is not wholly confident, for speaking of 1744, he says:—

"In this and the two next years, Mr. Boswell has not assigned to Johnson any contributions to the 'Gentleman's Magazine;' yet there seems little doubt that from his connection with that work he derived, for some years, the chief and almost the only means of subsistence for himself and his wife; perhaps he may have acted as general editor with an annual

allowance, and he no doubt employed himself on more literary works than have been acknowledged. In this point the public loss is, perhaps, not great. *What he was unwilling to avow*, we need not be very solicitous to discover. Indeed, his personal history is, about this period, a blank, hidden, it is to be feared, in the obscurity of indigence—if *there was not also some political motive for concealment.*"

But this is but a temporary hesitation, and he soon rallies, and adopts the theory manfully. Why should it be "imaginative" to suppose that he was engaged on such a vast work as his Dictionary, which would require much preparatory study?

Then comes the statement that Johnson was privy to the concealment of a Jacobite—a good specimen of that colouring and garbling which Croker could not resist where he had a theory to make out. One would suppose from this that he was contriving secret meetings, shielding the man, &c. But on turning to Boswell, we find that this was a Mr. Drummond, "who, during his concealment in London till the act of pardon came out, *obtained the acquaintance of Dr. Johnson*, who justly esteemed him a very worthy man." (!)

In fact, busy with his literary labours, he had "come across" this Scotchman, who, he was told, had been concerned in the troubles, and was keeping quiet, and perhaps trying to earn something, till the general

amnesty came out. A very different thing to the "being privy to the concealment" of a rebel. But if one were inclined to solemnly refute such an hypothesis, it would be enough to say, that it would have been known and recollected that Johnson had taken share in the rebellion; especially, as it was long after made a charge against him that "he had had an uncle hanged" for some criminal offence; that he would have hardly ventured to bring out a play so soon after the transaction; and that the Government would scarcely have conferred a pension on so disloyal an object.

But now we come to the more droll view of the case. As our commentator makes his laborious way through his task, he begins to find himself at every step confronted with the most serious objections to his theory; stumbling-blocks that he cannot remove or pass by. But like Vertôt's "*mon siège est fait*," the theory once set up is immoveable and imperishable. Thus—

"I have heard him declare," says Boswell, "that if holding up his right hand would have secured victory at Culloden to Prince Charles's army, he was not sure he would have held it up; so little confidence had he in the right claimed by the House of Stuart, and so fearful was he of the consequences of another revolution on the throne of Great Britain. He, however, also said to the same gentleman, talking

of King James the Second, 'It was become impossible for him to reign any longer in this country.'"

This was a staggering passage; and there were others to follow in the same spirit. Blind to any defect in his original view, Mr. Croker had to devise a new theory. Johnson, seriously engaged in the rebellion, had become disgusted at the behaviour of the Scotch at Culloden, and had given them and the cause up! This seems almost incredible; but the view is gravely maintained all through the work. He says—

"I cannot but believe that the events of 1745 had some influence on Dr. Johnson personally, to the diminution of his Jacobite feelings. See ante, p. 54, n. 2. The battle of *Culloden* was fought some months after the Pretender's retreat out of England, *when, if at all, the occasion of Johnson's disgust must have happened.*"

"Occasion happened;" "if at all;" "cannot but believe." All this makes up a most curious bit of casuistry. The "disgust," which would suppose repulsion to what he had favoured, is a mere assumption, based on his first theory that Johnson had joined the cause, also an assumption.

"Somebody," says Dr. Maxwell in his "Collectanea," "observing that the Scotch Highlanders had made surprising efforts, considering their numerous wants," &c., "Yes, sir," said he, "their wants were



numerous; but you have not mentioned the greatest of them all—the want of Law.” This was surely plain speaking enough. But, says Croker, with more than usual solemnity, “It is not clear what is meant. Law, abstractedly speaking, would be one of the least wants of an invading army. Johnson, perhaps, meant either that they had not the law on their side, or that they had not legal means of enforcing discipline.” The first was of course what Johnson *did* mean. But, goes on Croker, “I have before (p. 54, n. 2) expressed my suspicion, that Johnson had received some personal affront or injustice from the Scotch in 1745: but how or where he could have come across them, I cannot conjecture.”

Again and again, as the subject of Johnson's dislike to the Scotch recurs,—and readers will recall what a pleasant “light comedy” topic it forms in Boswell's work, Croker sternly will have it that it must be traced to that one cause. Does Boswell declare it was a prejudice of the head, not of the heart, for that Johnson liked them? “This is a distinction,” says Croker, “which I am not sure that I understand. Did Mr. Boswell think that he improved the case by representing Johnson's dislike of Scotland as the result not of *feeling* but of *reason*? . . . after all such allowances, I must repeat my suspicion that there was some *personal* cause for this unreasonable, and, as it appears, *unaccountable* antipathy.”

And again, Boswell asked him, "Pray, sir, can you trace the cause of your antipathy to the Scotch?" JOHNSON. "I cannot, sir." BOSWELL. "Old Mr. Sheridan says it was because they sold Charles the First." JOHNSON. "Then, sir, old Mr. Sheridan has found out a very good reason."

Here Johnson speaks, if not "by the card," certainly with tolerable directness. But Mr. Croker has the true motive ever before him. "When Johnson asserted so distinctly that he could not trace the cause of his antipathy to the Scotch, it may seem unjust to attribute to him any secret personal motive. But it is the essence of prejudice to be unconscious of its cause; and, *I am convinced* that Johnson received in early life some serious injury or affront from the Scotch. See ante, p. 54, n. 2."

It is hard to restrain a smile, or even a laugh, as we read this! In vain Boswell goes on to give his opinion, that "probably," as he modestly says, this prejudice was owing to his having had in his view, "the worst part of the Scottish nation, the needy adventurers." But Croker is on him again, feeling that this told against "the early affront." "This can hardly have been the cause; Johnson had no aversion to these men, because they were scholars, and he was kind to them," &c.

But after these recurring difficulties, another blow to this theory of "disgust to the Jacobitism in

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1745," is in store for him, coming in the shape of Johnson's praise of the Stuarts:—

“Charles the Second knew his people, and rewarded merit. The church was at no time better filled than in his reign. He was the best king we have had from his time till the reign of our present Majesty, except James the Second, who was a very good king.”

Mr. Croker gives up the matter in despair, with—  
“All this seems so contrary to historical truth and common sense, that I cannot account for it. We are not now likely to discover how Johnson should have continued to 1775 so ardent a Jacobite!”

Connected with this, another specimen may be given. “I heard him once say, ‘that after the death of a violent Whig, with whom he used to contend with great eagerness, he felt his Toryism much abated.’ I suppose he meant Mr. Walmesley.”

“It seems unlikely,” says Mr. Croker, “that he and Mr. Walmesley could have had much intercourse since 1737, when Johnson removed to London; Mr. Walmesley continuing to reside in Lichfield, where he died in 1751.” Boswell, it will be seen, does not say it “was since 1737.” Walmesley was his great friend at Lichfield before that date. Why could not the discussions have occurred after 1737? Because it would damage the theory that Johnson had ceased to be a Jacobite in 1745. Why, too, could he not

have seen Mr. Walmsley on visits to Lichfield? because this would have been inconsistent with another gratuitous visit theory, viz., that Johnson for *twenty years* had never been down to see his mother! It is thus that we track the passages of this curious mind. Having disposed of Boswell's modestly expressed hypothesis, he goes on to suggest the person with whom it was *more* likely, observe, that Johnson had this discussion: "it was more probably some member of the Ivy-lane Club, *perhaps M<sup>r</sup> Ghie*, who was a strong Whig; as indeed was Dyer, but he survived to 1772."

There is nothing to point to the Ivy-lane Club; while the speculation on a speculation in Dyer's case, itself disposed of by a fatal objection, as soon as made, is highly characteristic. But we go on.

Once, when Johnson was abusing the Scotch, he said pleasantly, "'We should have had you for the same price, though there had been no union, as we might have had Swiss, or other troops. No, no, I shall agree to a separation. You have only to *go home.*' Just as he had said this, I, to divert the subject, showed him the signed assurances of the three successive kings of the Hanover family, to maintain the presbyterian establishment in Scotland. 'We'll give you that,' said he, 'into the bargain.'"

What reader could mistake the last sentence—

“Keep your church; we won't interfere with that; only go home!” But thus Croker:

“This seems to have been a touch of *Jacobite* jocularly, meaning that Johnson would be willing, in consideration of the dissolution of the Union, to allow the *Hanover family* to reign in Scotland [!], inferring, of course, that the *Stuarts* were to reign in England.”

“Amidst some patriotic groans, somebody (I think the Alderman) said, ‘Poor old England is lost.’ JOHNSON. ‘Sir, it is not so much to be lamented that old England is lost, as that the Scotch have found it.’” On which Boswell has this note, and Croker a note on Boswell's: “It would not become me to expatiate on this strong and pointed remark, in which a very great deal of meaning is condensed.—BOSWELL. Mr. Boswell seems to take *as serious* what was evidently a mere pleasantry, and could have no serious meaning that I can discover.—CROKER.”

Considering that in the next line Mr. Wilkes alludes to Lord Bute, and that the Scotch influence at Court led to much political convulsion, Boswell was not far out in saying that there was a good deal of “meaning” in it; and, granting that it was “a pleasantry,” it surely seems absurd to say that Johnson's remark “could have no serious meaning that I can discover.”

Boswell praises a passage in Johnson's review of Tytler's "Mary Queen of Scots." "It has been fashionable," he said, "to vilify the house of Stuart, and to exalt and magnify the reign of Elizabeth. The Stuarts have found few apologists, for the dead cannot pay for praise; and who will, without reward, oppose the tide of popularity?" On which, Croker: "This sentence may be generous, but it is not very logical. Elizabeth was surely as dead as the Stuarts, and would no more pay for praise than they could."

Amazing! Elizabeth being dead, could not, any more than the Stuarts, pay for praise; but she *had* successors, and therefore apologists, which the other had not. And was, therefore, secure of paid-for praise.

§. *That the Right Honourable Edmund Burke was a Man of Loose Character.*

Johnson, speaking in his trenchant way of "a celebrated friend and eminent statesman," declared that he had his doubts of his morality if it were put to the test. "I fear," he said, "—— would not scruple to pick up a wench."

Connected with which is the drollest of Mr. Croker's speculations. He cannot suppose that Johnson would apply such a description, to one so moral as Burke was, a father of a family, &c. He

appears shocked at the idea, and is indeed as unconsciously provocative of amusement as Boswell. His plan is this; having settled on a theory, if anything conflicted with it, he dismissed it on the ground of the *truth* of the theory. "Eminent person," he had decreed, always referred to Burke. The allusion was really to Windham, the unpublished portions of whose diary, I am assured, supports Johnson's speculation.

"When I objected to keeping company," says Boswell, "with a notorious infidel, a celebrated friend of ours said to me, 'I do not think that men who live laxly in the world, as you and I do, can with propriety assume such an authority: Dr. Johnson may, who is uniformly exemplary in his conduct. But it is not very consistent to shun an infidel to-day, and get drunk to-morrow.' JOHNSON. 'Nay, sir, this is sad reasoning. Because a man cannot be right in all things, is he to be right in nothing? Because a man sometimes gets drunk, is he therefore to steal? This doctrine would very soon bring a man to the gallows.'"

First, who was the celebrated friend? "No doubt Mr. Burke," says Croker. What! the decorous Burke, model father and husband, "living laxly in the world," *like* Boswell; "getting drunk to-morrow!" Surely Windham would be a better guess. As we have just seen, Boswell, always

uses "eminent" as the fitting description of this great man. But, having fixed him with this character, Croker proceeds to vindicate the "sad reasoning" that Burke would never have been responsible for. Thus, "his advice, so far from being 'sad reasoning,' seems very sensible and just. Before you take upon yourself to be a *ensor morum*, you should, at least, reform your own flagrant irregularities. And we know, when Boswell consulted Johnson about refusing to do law business of a Sunday, he advised him to comply with the practice of the world, till he should become so considerable as to be authorised to set an example.—CROKER, 1835."

Of course, here is a complete misapprehension of Johnson. He was not urging Boswell to set up as CENSOR MORUM, or to try and make others better, but simply, if bad, to avoid bad company, and not become worse.

§. *That near the End of his Life Johnson was buying up compromising Letters, Pocket-books, &c.*

Amusing as the Scotch delusion is, it is nothing to the development that it assumes later on, operating on a matter indirectly connected with it. At the end of his days, the excellent Johnson, more than usually scrupulous, is anxious not to have



anything on his conscience, and gives a commission to a Scotch Mrs. Stewart about a pocket-book that belonged to her deceased brother. In this matter the reader must prepare for an entertainment in which our commentator out-Crokers Croker. His mania, it will be seen, blinds him to sense and syntax. "I wrote to him," says Boswell (from Edinburgh), "to say that, after a good deal of inquiry, I had discovered the sister of Mr. Francis Stewart, one of his amanuenses when writing his Dictionary;—that I had, as desired by him, paid her a guinea for an old pocket-book of her brother's, which he had retained;—and that the good woman, who was in very moderate circumstances, but contented and placid, wondered at his scrupulous and liberal honesty, and received the guinea as if sent her by Providence."

This civility Johnson acknowledged handsomely, and having a fresh scruple as to an old letter of his own which he had found in the pocket of the book, gives him a further commission:—"If you come hither through Edinburgh, send for Mrs. Stewart, and give from me another guinea for the letter in the old case, to which I shall not be satisfied with my claim till she gives it me. \* \* \* Tell her," he adds on another occasion, "that in the letter-case was a letter relating to me, for which I will give her another guinea. The letter is of consequence only to me."

Could anything be more simple, clear, or prosaic? What follows seems incredible, and is unprecedented in the annals of misapprehension. Johnson, it may be repeated, for clearness' sake, had Stewart's old pocket-book in his possession; pays a guinea for it in lieu of compensation; finds a letter in it; and thinks, as he had received something not contracted for, he must pay another guinea, which is accordingly done. Now let us introduce Mr. Croker, who behaves on this occasion much as his immortal namesake in "The Goodnatured Man" would have done. He scents—what will the reader suppose?—a damning piece of evidence that Johnson was out in the '45! Here is this immortal note:—"This affair of Francis Stewart and the pocket-book, *which Boswell quite mistook, was, I believe, mysteriously connected with some important detail of Johnson's former history.* See the General Appendix, where I have collected all the information I can find on the subject."

Turning eagerly to what is thus referred to—two closely printed columns—we find him beginning to enter the morass by repeating that, "Indeed, Mr. Boswell's account of the little negotiation is *very confused.* In 1779 he (Boswell) states that he had, as desired by Johnson, 'discovered the sister of Stewart, and given her a guinea for an old pocket-book of her brother's which Dr. Johnson had re-

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tained.' But this must have been a total mistake on the part of Boswell; for it appears that the sister *had* the pocket-book or letter-case in her own possession [!], and that it was for obtaining it that Johnson offered the guinea. The matter was probably explained in some letters not given; for in April, 1780, Johnson expresses satisfaction at the success of Boswell's transaction with Mrs. Stewart, by which it may be inferred that Boswell had obtained *the letter-case* from her [!]; but the negotiation was not terminated for four years after. In 1784, Johnson writes to Boswell, 'I desire you see Mrs. Stewart once again, and say that in the letter-case was a letter relating to me.' He now sees that the retention of Stewart's old pocket-book was a total misapprehension on the part of Boswell, and that he really wanted to obtain the pocket-book for the sake of the letter which it contained, and which he seems not to have gotten [!]. But what letter *could this be of consequence to Johnson* when on the verge of the grave, yet so long neglected by him. Boswell's original error and his subsequent silence on the subject *are very strange.* \* \* \* It might, no doubt, have been a mistake about the *copy* of the Dictionary, but this, as we shall see by the following explanation, could have hardly interested Johnson at the end of thirty years; while the contradictions and mystery of the case as we have it,

and the strange and utter ignorance of *what Johnson was about in the years 1745-6*—together with many smaller circumstances, incline me to suspect *that Johnson may have taken some personal share in the disaffected movements of that period, and that the letter he was so anxious about, may have had some reference to those transactions in which Stuart was likely enough to have been engaged.*"

Was there ever such hopeless obfuscation! And was I right in promising entertainment? There is absolutely nothing like it!

It is all to be set to the account of that original delusion, which, like Mr. Dick's about Charles the First, intruded itself to the prejudice of his common sense and of plain English. Yet this wonderful mistake has never been corrected in all the innumerable editions.

§. *That Lord Chesterfield behaved well to Johnson.*

Here is another delusion, associated with Lord Chesterfield's connection with Johnson's Dictionary. Boswell's account of the Prospectus being inscribed to the Peer is, (a) that it was a suggestion of Dodsley's, to which Johnson agreed as an excuse for delay. He adds that allusions to Lord Chesterfield's advice and opinions, in the body of the document, prove that there had been "particular com-

munication with his lordship concerning it," after the publisher had opened the matter to him. And Dr. Taylor told Boswell that (*b*) it had been taken from his house to be shown to Lord Chesterfield. This is all consistent. Yet our Croker says as to (*a*): "The reader will see on the next pages, under Johnson's own hand, that this account of the affair was inaccurate; but if it were correct, would it not invalidate Johnson's subsequent complaint of Lord Chesterfield's inattention and ingratitude? for, even if his lordship *had* neglected that which had been dedicated to him only by laziness and accident, he could not justly be charged with ingratitude; a dedicator who means no compliment, has no reason to complain if he be not rewarded: but more of this hereafter.—CROKER." As to (*b*), Croker says that: "This also must be inaccurate, for the plan contains numerous allusions and references to Lord Chesterfield's opinions; and there is the evidence both of Lord Chesterfield and Johnson, that Dodsley was the person who communicated with his lordship on the subject.—C. 1831. But I have positive evidence on this point. Mr. Anderdon purchased at Mr. James Boswell's sale many of his father's MSS., one of which he communicated to me, after my first edition, and which is very curious, and indeed important to the question between Lord Chesterfield and Johnson. It is a draft of the pro-

spectus of the Dictionary carefully written by an amanuensis, but signed in great form by Johnson's own hand. It was evidently that which was laid before Lord Chesterfield. Some useful remarks are made in his lordship's hand and some in another. Johnson adopted all these suggestions. Amongst them is to be found the opinion (see *post*, 27th March, 1772) that *great* should be pronounced *grate*, given in a couplet of Rowe,—

‘As if misfortune made the throne her seat,  
And none could be unhappy but the great.’

‘*Undoubtedly,*’ remarked Lord Chesterfield, ‘*a bad rhyme, but found in a good poet.*’ This MS. now belongs to Mr. Lewis Pocock.—CROKER, 1846.”

Boswell had the account from Johnson himself and his friend Taylor. He saw no inconsistency or inaccuracy, as, indeed, there is none. For in the next passage Boswell is talking of addressing the plan, for which leave would have to be obtained. When completed it was lent to Taylor, and from his house carried to Lord Chesterfield. The allusions to Lord Chesterfield's opinions were no doubt the result of previous communications either in the shape of the marginal notes, or of that interview or two when Johnson “waited in your outer room.” Not, as Mr. Croker seems to misunderstand, that Dodsley was the medium of communication for criticisms, as if his lordship's *lexicographical* opinions would be thus

transmitted. Johnson does not give any "evidence" to that effect, nor does Boswell.

I have not seen this MS. plan, but even from Mr. Pocock's Johnsonian Catalogue we can get a very accurate idea of how the case stands. In it we find *two* drafts. The first—

"A short Scheme for compiling a new Dictionary of the English Language, *dated Apl.* 20, 1746. This most interesting manuscript (occupying 19 leaves) is entirely in the autograph of Dr. Johnson, and is the original draft of the 'Plan' before Dodsley had requested Johnson to inscribe it to Lord Chesterfield. There are some friendly critical observations on the blank pages in another hand."

This is evidently the one seen by Mr. Croker, for he says that some of the interlineations are in Lord Chesterfield's handwriting, and some in another. These filled nearly nineteen leaves. Next came the official version, the result of his lordship's remarks, &c., and other amendments, also in Mr. Pocock's possession. It is thus described:—

"Original MS. of the Plan of Johnson's Dictionary, in 46 leaves qto, addressed to Lord Chesterfield. It is in the handwriting of an amanuensis, but has copious corrections in Dr. Johnson's own hand, with his subscription and signature at the end."

Surely this makes all clear and intelligible, and quite bears out Boswell's account.

For the subsequent quarrel and the famous letter on the appearance of the Dictionary, Mr. Croker has a fresh theory, justifying Lord Chesterfield's neglect of Johnson on the ground of deafness, ill-health, withdrawal from society.

"It must be remembered," he says, "that Johnson's introduction to Lord Chesterfield did not take place till his lordship was past *fifty*, and he was just then attacked by a disease which gradually *estranged him from all society*. The neglect lasted, it is charged, from 1748 to 1755: now, his private letters to his most intimate friends will prove that during that period Lord Chesterfield may be excused for not cultivating Johnson's society:—*e.g.* 20th Jan. 1749. 'My *old* disorder in my head hindered me from acknowledging your former letters.' 30th June, 1752. 'I am here in my hermitage, very deaf, and, consequently *alone*; but I am *less dejected than most people in my situation would be*.' 10th Oct. 1753. 'I belong *no more to social life*.' Johnson, perhaps, knew nothing of all this, and imagined that Lord Chesterfield declined his acquaintance on some opinion derogatory to his personal pretensions. Mr. Tyers, however, suggests a more precise and probable ground for Johnson's animosity than Boswell gives, by hinting that Johnson expected some *pecuniary assistance* from Lord Chesterfield."

But what Johnson complains of is his treat-



ment when the patron was in good health and in society—

“When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it.”

That was what he complained of. He was *then* kept waiting, or “repulsed from the door,” when other company was admitted. It is much more likely, as suggested in an acute article on Johnson in the “Quarterly,” that, as he was not then “the great Dr. Johnson,” but obscure, Lord Chesterfield was disinclined to be, in familiar phrase, “bothered” with an uncouth drudge. Finally, during the interval, Lord Chesterfield spoke in the House of Lords, received foreign guests, and was not “withdrawn from society” at all.

§. *That Sir Joshua Tampered with a Letter to deprive Boswell of Credit.*

This question, apart from the delusion, leads to an interesting point in Johnson's life, viz. : The application for an increase of Johnson's pension, to enable him to go to Italy. Boswell certainly first *moved* in the matter and wrote to Lord Thurlow; but he owns that

it had been often debated among his friends, and it was not until advised directly by Sir Joshua that he wrote his letter. He had to leave town as soon as the matter was sent forward, and the "pious negotiation" was left in the hands of Sir Joshua, a person of far greater weight and consideration, and with whom the whole matter was transacted. Hawkins says, "Sir Joshua undertook to solicit an addition to his pension, and to that end applied to Lord Thurlow." "It is strange," writes Boswell, "that Sir John Hawkins should have related that the application was made by Sir Joshua Reynolds, when he could so easily have been informed of the truth by inquiring of Sir Joshua. Sir John's carelessness to ascertain facts is very remarkable."

Of all Mr. Croker's extraordinary mysteries and "mares'-nests," the most singular is surely the one he contrived in connection with this affair of Johnson's pension. As is well known, "the application made through Lord Thurlow was not successful," but the latter generously offered an advance of five or six hundred pounds on a mortgage of Johnson's pension, the security being merely added to save Johnson's pride. This was simple, but Mr. Croker found Lord Thurlow's letter among Reynolds' papers, and thereupon proceeds to build his "nest":—

"It was stated that the cause of the failure was *the refusal of the king himself*, but from the following

letter it appears that the *matter was never mentioned to his majesty*; that, as time pressed, his lordship proposed the before-mentioned arrangement as from himself, running the risk of obtaining the king's subsequent approbation when he should have an opportunity of mentioning it to his majesty. This affords some, and yet not a satisfactory, explanation of the device suggested by Lord Thurlow of Johnson's giving him a *mortgage on his pension*.—'Nov. 18, 1784.—'DEAR SIR,—My choice, if that had been left me, would certainly have been that the matter should not have been talked of at all . . . It would have suited the purpose better if nobody had heard of it, except Dr. Johnson, you, and J. Boswell. *But the chief objection to the rumour is that his majesty is supposed to have refused it.* Had that been so, I should not have communicated the circumstance. It was impossible for me to take the king's pleasure on the suggestion I presumed to move. I am an untoward solicitor. The time seemed to press, and I chose rather to take on myself the risk of his majesty's concurrence than delay a journey which might conduce to Dr. Johnson's health and comfort . . .—THURLLOW.'

"That this letter was designedly kept from Mr. Boswell's knowledge, is rendered probable by the following curious circumstance. On the face of the original letter *his name* has been obliterated with so much care that but for the different colour of the ink

and some other small circumstances, it would not have been discoverable; it is artfully done, and the sentence appears to run, ' *except Dr. Johnson, you, and I*'—*Boswell* being erased. This seems to be an uncandid trick, to defraud *Boswell* of his merit in this matter.—C."

All this, as Mr. Croker usually is on such matters, is simply absurd. The original refusal was in the first week in September; but this letter is dated November 18, and refers *not* to the application for the increase of pension, but to Thurlow's proposal of the mortgage. Mr. Croker says that the phrase "impossible to take the king's pleasure," shows that no application to his majesty had been made at all. But all the following words, "the *suggestion I* presumed to move," prove that he is speaking of the mortgage, to which the king's consent was necessary. The increase to the pension had been refused by the king or by the minister. Then the story of Thurlow's generosity had got about, with the addition that the king had refused to allow the mortgage; and, on Reynolds writing to say that *he* had not published the matter, the chancellor wrote this letter.

But there is something unexplained or passed over in this transaction, for at the moment Johnson had really plenty of money at command. Langton owed him £750, and a little later offered to repay him.

Dr. Percy, and Barclay and Perkins, the brewers, held monies of his, and, strangest of all, he had £1000 saved and invested in the funds. The expenses of the trip to Italy would have been covered by a couple of hundred of pounds, as his living there would have been about the same there as at home. Why, then, did Johnson require assistance from the public purse? I think it will appear that Johnson had long entertained the idea of an increase to his pension, and fancied that here would be a good opportunity.

On April 11, 1776, when Johnson dined at Paoli's with a party, no one suspected that the great moralist had that very morning written to the Chamberlain, to ask for rooms in Hampton Court Palace on the ground that—

“Some of the apartments,” he wrote, “are now vacant, in which I am encouraged to hope that I may, by an application to your lordship, obtain a residence. Such a grant would be considered by me as a great favour, and I hope, to a man who has had the honour of *vindicating his Majesty's Government*, a retreat in one of his homes may not be improperly or unworthily allowed.”

The request was politely refused on that day month. This curious incident escaped Mr. Croker, and it seems to me to point conclusively to the fact, that Johnson was considered—and considered himself—to be earning his pay and pension by being a political scribe in the

interest of the Government. The idea of Mr. Croker, that he was not expected to work, and merely gave an independent support, does not hold. Connected with this is that view of Mr. Croker's as to the £100 which Johnson wrote to a friend to invest for him, saying that it had come to him in an unexpected manner. Mr. Croker says it was payment for one of his Government pamphlets. If so, why "unexpected?" And the Government would naturally think that their pensioner was sufficiently well remunerated. But this speculation is offered with due diffidence as coming from one who is reprobating speculation on insufficient grounds in another. The reader may fancy for himself the picture of Johnson domiciled at Hampton Court. The application and reply is given in Malone's "Memoirs," and in those of Mr. George Rose.

We may be certain that the erased words "J. Boswell" only existed for Mr. Croker's morbid and excited eyes. The fact is, in this part of the transaction—viz., the mortgage—Lord Thurlow had nothing to do with Boswell, who had left town. Above all, he was not likely to call him "J. Boswell." The words are probably "I, myself." It may, however, be the case that there was such an erasure, but, if so, it was done by Lord Thurlow on the ground of accuracy, probably recollecting that Boswell knew nothing of this part of the transaction. But the

“unworthy attempt to cheat Boswell,” by such a man as Sir Joshua, is truly characteristic of the author of the virulent and “detective” articles which filled the “Quarterly Review.”

The fact is, however, the matter was mentioned to the king, though not officially, by West the painter. It was no doubt felt that too much was asked. Thurlow may have felt disinclined to press the matter on a man so odious to him as was Pitt. All these elements help to clear the matter from the confusion in which Mr. Croker left it.

§ *That Johnson had no leanings to the Roman Catholic Faith.*

This idea, that Johnson should have been favourably inclined to the Roman Catholic faith, inflames Mr. Croker to an extraordinary degree. A little instance will show this. It being reported to him that a Mr. Chamberlayne had given up good prospects in the Church of England, to become a Roman Catholic, Johnson, ever on the side of principle, and sacrifices made for principle, exclaimed, fervently, “God Almighty bless him !” Now to contrast Mr. Croker’s charitable view of this ordinary matter :—

“Mr. Hallam informs me that there is here an inaccuracy. Mr. George Chamberlayne was a clerk in the Treasury, and never was in the Church of

England. He became a Romish priest, and died in London within the last twenty years."

So far, so good, though we cannot be quite certain that Mr. Hallam was accurate in his correction. For I find that Boswell had been corrected also, and in his first edition had put "preferment" instead of "prospects." This looks as if he was in possession of the real facts. However that may be, Mr. Croker set his detectives to work to hunt up something that would enfeeble Johnson's generous approbation. What shall we suppose was his theory? The man was insane! At least, it was likely he was. For Mr. Croker ascertained that his elder brother had committed suicide by throwing himself out of a window. And, adds our editor:—

"The catastrophe of his elder brother makes me suspect something of mental aberration in this case, as *there certainly has been in numerous similar conversions.*"

Every reader will recall Johnson's numerous vindications of Roman Catholic doctrine in discussions with Boswell, in which he has been merely considered to be talking for argument. But what is of more importance is his practice, of doing penance, fasting, and praying for the dead. His system of "proving himself," in his spiritual diary, approaches more to Roman Catholic than to those records of "refreshment" and "experiences," which are the staple



of Hannah More and Wilberforce's diaries. He even declared that, if he were dying, "he would be a Papist;" but that an obstinate rationality kept him back. It is remarkable, too, that Roman Catholics have a sympathy with Johnson, from this instinct of union. Add to this, the extraordinary circumstance of his having seriously proposed to go and live with the Benedictines in the Convent at Paris. As to his "talking for argument" in the pleas he urged for that religion, there is the remarkable circumstance to be considered, that his friend, who was drawing out these opinions from him, had himself been a Roman Catholic. In early life, when at Glasgow University, he had formally joined that communion. Efforts were made to detach him, by sending him to London. There Dr. Jortin was employed to win him back: not with much success, it would appear:—

"Your young gentleman called at my house on Thursday noon, April 3," writes Dr. Jortin. "But from that time to this I have heard nothing of him. He began, I suppose, to suspect some design upon him, and his new friends and fathers may have represented me to him as an heretic and an infidel, whom he ought to avoid as he would the plague. I should gladly have used my best endeavours upon this melancholy occasion, but, to tell you the truth, my hopes of success would have been small. Nothing is more intractable than a fanatic. I heartily pity your

good friend. If his son be really sincere in his new superstition, and sober in his morals, there is some comfort in that, for surely a man may be a Papist and an honest man."

Even at the close of his life, Boswell used to allude to his own "Popish" hankerings. So when these two sympathisers discussed the matter, they were not likely to be talking for argument's sake.

This religious sympathy is revealed in Boswell's notice of Mrs. Johnson's death. His own wife had died in 1790, just as his book was at press. So he could not put the matter as he wished, until issuing his "Corrections and Additions;" and, still distracted with his loss, he expressed his feelings in this pointed way:—

*"The following very solemn and affecting prayer was found after Dr. Johnson's decease. I present it to the world as an undoubted proof of a circumstance in the character of my illustrious friend, which, though some, whose hard minds I never shall envy, may attack as superstitious, will, I am sure, endear him more to numbers of good men. I have an additional, and that a personal, motive for presenting it, because it sanctions what I myself have always maintained, and am fond to indulge:—*

*"April 26, 1752, being after 12 at Night of the 25th.*

*"O Lord! Governor of heaven and earth, in whose hands are embodied the departed spirits, if*

thou hast ordained the souls of the dead to minister to the living, and appointed my departed wife to have care of me, grant that I may enjoy the good effects of her attention and ministration, whether exercised by appearance, impulses, dreams, or in any other manner agreeable to thy government. Forgive my presumption, enlighten my ignorance, and however meaner agents are employed, grant me the blessed influences of thy Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*'

*"What actually followed upon this most interesting piece of devotion by Johnson, we are not informed; but I, whom it has pleased God to afflict in a similar manner to that which occasioned it, have certain experience of benignant communication by dreams."*

Now, the whole of these singular passages, which illustrates the character of the two men, is put by Mr. Boswell in italics; a most unusual circumstance in any note of his. He clearly wished to emphasise his own grief to the public.

Mr. Croker indeed allows that Miss Seward *does not scruple to say* that Mr. Boswell confessed to her his idea, "that Johnson was a Roman Catholic in his heart." But he adds, "her credit is by this time so low, that it is hardly necessary to observe how improbable it is that Boswell could have made any such confession." "She lied," in the other words, "and knew she lied." Poor Miss Seward! After

supplying some arguments, he says: "And, finally, when it was proposed that monuments of eminent men should be erected in St. Paul's, and when some one suggested to begin with Pope, Johnson observed, 'Why, sir, as Pope was a Roman Catholic, I wouldn't have his to be the first.'" Another extraordinary misapprehension, as Johnson was objecting on the ground of the inappropriateness of *commencing* such a series in a Protestant Cathedral with a Roman Catholic.

§ *That he disliked Swift, Lord Gower, Miss Hill-Boothby, and others.*

Mr. Croker's favourite mode of accounting for difficulties, is to assume that Johnson was possessed by some morbid hatred of persons who had once offended him. Were this supposition founded in all cases, Johnson would stand before us an embodiment of the most unworthy prejudice and meanest animosities. He had, it seems, this unaccountable hatred of Swift, Lord Lyttelton, &c.

First, as to Swift. About the year 1739, Johnson being anxious to obtain the mastership of a Free School, Lord Gower wrote to a friend of Swift's to see if the Dean could obtain for him an honorary degree from Dublin University. This attempt failed. Pope, in a well-known letter, mentions

how he also tried "to forward his interests; Mr. P., from the merit of this work ('London'), which was all the knowledge he had of him, endeavoured to serve him without his own application; and wrote to my Lord Gore, but he did not succeed."

Of these simple facts, Mr. Croker contrives to make the following entanglement:—

"At this time only *Lord Gower*. It seems not easy to reconcile Lord Gower's and Pope's letters, and Mr. Boswell's account of this transaction. Lord Gower's letter says that it is written at the request of some *Staffordshire neighbours*. Nothing more natural. He does not even allude to Pope; and certainly it would have been most extraordinary that Pope, the dearest friend of Swift, should solicit Lord Gower to ask a favour of the Dean. The more natural supposition would be, that Lord Gower's letter was addressed to Pope himself; but Pope says that he wrote unsolicited to Lord Gower in Johnson's favour for a school in *Shropshire*; but did not succeed. In short, I cannot reconcile these discrepancies, but by the unsatisfactory conjecture that Pope had applied in the first instance to Lord Gower; that Lord Gower was willing to assist Johnson, but was met by the difficulty about the degree of A.M.; and that then it was arranged that his Lordship should write to Pope such a letter as he could transmit to Swift."

Any one that reads his letters dispassionately, will see that what Pope did was merely to recommend Johnson to Lord Gower's patronage. The earnestness and length of Lord Gower's letter, show that he was eager to oblige the poet, and is surely the result of the latter's recommendation. The idea that it was written to Pope himself is ludicrous; as if a patron were to reply to a friend, recommending a *protégé*, by warmly appealing to *him* to do something. Though the whole is not clearly, that is fully, stated, there are no "discrepancies." But now comes the mysterious element. Swift's connection with the transaction, it will be seen, is of the faintest, remotest kind. Indeed, it scarcely exists. We know not whether Swift ever heard of the matter, or if the application was made to him. Nor do we know whether he applied to the university and was refused; or whether he declined so to apply. All is dark. Yet Mr. Croker more than hints that the Dean thereby incurred Johnson's implacable animosity:—

“The matter is in itself of no importance, except as it might explain Johnson's strong dislike both of Lord Gower and Dean Swift; which may have arisen from some misapprehension of their share in this *disappointment*.”

But—“I once took the liberty to ask him if Swift had personally offended him,” says Boswell, “and he had not.” “There, probably,” adds Mr. Croker,

“was no opportunity for what could be in strictness called *personal* offence, as they had never met; but that the affair of the Dublin degree may have created this prejudice.” Here we have Johnson’s own evidence, and what could be more decisive? But see the point taken “personally.” Boswell had asked, and Johnson—casuist, that he was—had ridden off on that quibble.

But for Lord Gower, who had written the warm pressing letter in favour of the obscure bookseller’s hack—the malignant Johnson never forgave *him*! It is true, indeed, that some years later, when busy with his dictionary, Johnson used his name as an unflattering definition. But Boswell explains that this was owing to the nobleman having deserted the Jacobite colours; and the allusion, in fact, did not appear. Even on this point, Mr. Croker makes a distortion. He comments on the definition in Johnson’s dictionary: “When I came,” said Johnson to Boswell, “to the word *Renegado*, after telling that it meant ‘one who deserts to the enemy, a revolter,’ I added, ‘*Sometimes we say a GOWER.*’ Thus it went to the press; but the printer had more wit than I, and struck it out.”

On this, we have this extraordinary speculation:—  
“I suppose when Johnson attempted the pun, he wrote the name (as pronounced) *Go’er*. He has *Goer* in his dictionary in its obvious meaning, and also ‘in

an ill sense,' as 'a go-between.' Lord Gower, after a long opposition to the Whig ministry (which was looked upon as equivalent to Jacobitism), accepted, in 1742, the office of Privy Seal."

It is difficult to restrain one's laughter. Why, we venture to say, that such a quip as this would not be attempted in the most miserable penny "funny" paper existing. Imagine any one saying to the present noble possessor of the title, in reference to his taste for fires, that "*he was a goer*" on Fire Engines—and then—Johnson's great Dictionary!

Another instance of Mr. Croker's being guided in his view by a whim, or *parti pris*, or prejudice, is his view of Johnson's feeling towards Miss Hill-Boothby. Boswell represents that Johnson showed a jealousy of Lord Lyttelton in his life of that nobleman, and quotes Mrs. Thrale as suggesting that "he was offended by *Molly* Aston's preference of his lordship to him." Here Boswell, in his blind dislike to the lady, misquotes her, for, as Malone says, "There is here a slight mistake in the text. It was not *Molly* Aston, but Hill-Boothby for whose affections Johnson and Lord Lyttelton were rival candidates."

Mrs. Thrale, in her "marginal" notes on Boswell's book, which she must have read with singular feelings, writes temperately enough: "I never said so. (In her book). I believe Lord Lyttelton



and Molly Aston were not acquainted. No, no; it was Miss Boothby he preferred to be jealous of, and I said so in the 'Anecdotes.' "

Here, surely, the matter might have been left. But Croker seems to have a morbid literary dislike to this lady, Miss Boothby—such as he had to so many others;—and he accordingly proceeds to erect one of his strange grotesque fabrics, which it will be amusing now to consider:—

"The *mistake* of the gay and handsome Molly Aston, the object of Johnson's youthful admiration, for Miss Boothby, whom he never saw till she was an ailing and ascetic old maid, is surely not a *slight* one. (See ante, p. 20, n. 2.) Mrs. Piozzi states that Johnson confessed that he had depreciated Lyttelton from a jealous recollection of the preference that Miss Boothby showed him. But this would indeed have been an *odium in longum jacens*, as Miss Boothby had been dead twenty-five years. She might, perhaps, have offended the proud spirit of Johnson, by paying more attention to so distinguished a visitor as *Sir George Lyttelton*; but that *he*, a married and eminently moral man, could, at the time of Johnson's acquaintance with her, have had any design on poor Miss Boothby's *heart*, is quite impossible."

It will be seen that Malone merely corrects a clerical error of Boswell's in transcription, who, in copying, had put one name for another. This he

describes as a slight mistake in one so accurate as Boswell was. It is enough to point to the extraordinary turn Mr. Croker gives to the matter. Neither Malone nor Boswell was concerned at the moment with the value of the claims of the two ladies. And turning to the reference given for proof of this statement, the "ante, p. 20, n. 2," we read, "Miss Boothby was born in 1708, and died in 1756. For the last three years of her life this lady maintained a pious and somewhat mystical correspondence with Dr. Johnson. Miss Seward choosed to imagine that there was an *early* attachment between Miss Boothby and Johnson; but all that lady's stories are worse than apocryphal. The *first* letter, dated July, 1753, proves that the acquaintance was then recent."

It may be stated plainly, that there is nothing in the letter of July, 1753, to prove the acquaintance recent. The proposal for the *correspondence* was recent. But there is a passage in it which runs, "One of the most eminent of them, *you have seen and greatly admired*, and loved. It is but a faint ray of that brightness and virtue which shone in her, and which is a reflection only to be seen in me, her unworthy substitute in the care of her dearest remains." This was an allusion to Mrs. Fitzherbert, now deceased, and her six children; and Miss Hill-Boothby was staying with Mr. Fitzherbert, taking care of

them. There are other allusions of the same kind in other letters. She also mentions as their mutual friend, Dr. Laurence and his family. Now we turn to an early page in Boswell, who received from Mrs. Laurence an account of Johnson's position in society at Ashbourne: "She remembers Dr. Johnson on a visit to Dr. Taylor, at Ashbourn, some time between the end of the year '37 and the middle of the year '40; she rather thinks it to have been after he and his wife were removed to London. During his stay at Ashbourn, he made frequent visits to Mr. Meynell, at Bradley, where his company was much desired by the ladies of the family, who were, perhaps, in point of elegance and accomplishments, inferior to few of those with whom he was afterwards acquainted. *Mr. Meynell's eldest daughter was afterwards married to Mr. Fitzherbert.* Of her, Dr. Johnson said in Dr. Laurence's study, *she had* the best understanding he ever met with in any human being. At Mr. Meynell's he also commenced that friendship with Mrs. Hill-Boothby, sister to the present Sir Brook Boothby, which continued till her death. *The young woman whom he used to call Molly Aston,* was sister to Sir Thomas Aston."

Could anything be more distinct? The words in italics show how Boswell fell into the mistake, as his eye had travelled down a line too low. Further, Miss Seward, a Lichfield lady, says that he had an

early attachment to Miss Boothby. Johnson himself begins one of his letters to her, "Dearest Dear," and another, "*My sweet Angel*," and tells her "that he has none but her on whom his heart reposes." So far from this being a "mystic" correspondence, that is, in a sort of Hannah More strain, it is of an entertaining kind, serious and earnest in parts, as became a person who was nearly dying; but dealing with many topics, it leaves an impression as of an interesting and rather charming person; and the only "ailing and ascetic old maidishness" in the matter, is in the acrimonious comment of our critic himself. Nor must his last touch be passed over, *viz.*, the vindication of Lord Lyttelton as "a married and eminently moral man, with designs, &c."

§ *That Mr. Bewley was an idiot.*

"The following curious anecdote," says the amiable and appreciative Boswell, "I insert in Dr. Burney's own words:—

"Dr. Burney related to Dr. Johnson the partiality which his writings had excited in a friend of Dr. Burney's, the late Mr. Bewley, well known in Norfolk by the name of the *Philosopher of Mus-singham*; who, from the "Rambles" and plan of his Dictionary, and long before the author's fame was established by the Dictionary itself, or any

other work, had conceived such a reverence for him, that he earnestly begged Dr. Burney to give him the cover of the first letter he had received from him, as a relic of so estimable a writer. This was in 1755. In 1760, when Dr. Burney visited Dr. Johnson at the Temple, in London, where he had then chambers, he happened to arrive there before he was up; and being shown into the room where he was to breakfast, finding himself alone, he examined the contents of the apartment, to try whether he could, undiscovered, steal anything to send to his friend Bewley, as another relic of the admirable Dr. Johnson. But finding nothing better to his purpose, he cut some bristles off his hearth-broom, and enclosed them in a letter to his country enthusiast, who received them with due reverence. The Doctor was so sensible of the honour done to him by a man of genius and science, to whom he was an utter stranger, that he said to Dr. Burney, "Sir, there is no man possessed of the smallest portion of modesty, but must be flattered with the admiration of such a man. I'll give him a set of my 'Lives,' if he will do me the honour to accept of them." In this he kept his word; and Dr. Burney had not only the pleasure of gratifying his friend with a present more worthy of his acceptance than the segment from the hearth-broom, but soon after introducing him to Dr. Johnson himself in Bolt

Court, with whom he had the satisfaction of conversing a considerable time, not a fortnight before his death; which happened in St. Martin's Street, during his visit to Dr. Burney, in the house [No. 36] where the great Sir Isaac Newton had lived and died before.'"

Not only a "curious," but an interesting anecdote, their share in this little adventure being highly creditable to all concerned. It did not, however, thus strike the sour mind of our commentator, who, with a sort of hostility to anything gracious and natural, brought it to the touchstone of bitter criticism.

"If this anecdote were seriously true, Mr. Bewley might have been better called an *idiot* than an *enthusiast*. That he should have really received the *bristles* with *reverence*—that Burney should not have mentioned the fact to Johnson for *twenty-five years*, and that Johnson should have considered it as an *honour*, would be very strange. Nor does the story acquire much confirmation from Madame D'Arblay's addition, that it happened in *Bolt Court*, where Johnson did not live till seventeen years after the assigned date. I conclude the affair must have been a mere *pleasantry*."

These objections amount merely to a disinclination to accept the story. The man was not "an idiot," but a good, simple country doctor, and

Johnson was likely enough to pity, and appreciate such devotion. That he received the bristles with "due reverence"—not so emphatic a term as reverence—was as much a return for the thoughtful good nature of his friend, as to show his appreciation of the gift. But, as Miss Burney explains in her work, he really "hailed it with good-humoured acclamation, and preserved it through life," thus showing the meaning to be put on "*due* reverence." That Burney "should not have mentioned the fact to Johnson for twenty-five years would be very strange," thinks Mr. Croker. But the reason is, that he had not seen Johnson since, until the year 1775 or 1776 (an interval of sixteen years), during which time so trifling an incident would have been forgotten. The "Lives" were published in 1781, and must have been presented to Bewley about 1782; and, as he died in 1783, at most twenty-two, not twenty-five, years could have elapsed. But this is a trivial objection. As to Madame D'Arbly stating that the scene was in Bolt Court, in the "Memoirs" of her father (I., 126), she distinctly states the incident took place at the chambers in the Temple, where Johnson "then resided"—most distinct and precise. These are certainly trifling points; but it shows how valueless such trenchant criticism is.

§ *That Johnson was not in Fashionable Society.*

I give a list—a very incomplete one—of the

"persons of quality" with whom Johnson was acquainted:—

Duke of Devonshire, Duc de Chaulnes, The Bristol Family, Lords Percy, Elliot, Lyttelton, Shelburne, Nugent, Pembroke, Palmerston, Scarsdale, Macartney, Errol, Graham, Eglinton, Bolingbroke, Charlemont, Lucan, Thurlow, Loughborough, Trimleston, Southwell, Bathurst; Sir Thomas Aston, Sir Brooke Boothby, Sir John Slade, Sir Alexander Dick, Sir Thomas Robinson, Sir Adam Fergusson, Sir Alexander Gordon, Sir A. Macdonald, and many more.

Among his lady friends were:—

Lady D. Middleton, Lady Lucan, Duchess of Hamilton, Lady Eglinton, Hon. Miss Monkton (afterwards Lady Cork), Lady D. Beauclerk, Hon. Mrs. Damer, Hon. Mrs. Boscawen, Mrs. Crewe, Mrs. Vesey, Mrs. Cholmondely, Mrs. Montague, all personages of the first fashion, who gave routs and parties, when the company was known to form in rows round Dr. Johnson's chair to hear him talk, and when he was, of course, introduced to every one of importance. Bishops, like those of London and St. Asaph, lawyers, judges—all ranks swelled his very large acquaintance. Surely never was man more *repandu*, or in what is called better society. Hence, one is inclined to believe that the worthy Boswell—besides being drawn by his genuine hero-



worship—found his special taste gratified by being the follower of so *recherché* a personage.

§ *That Johnson quarrelled with Langton because he was left out of his Will.*

Croker, in some points, was like Hawkins. His violent partizanship, not only where his prejudices were concerned, but where he had conceived a favourite theory, seems to have blinded him even to facts that, as it were, stared him in the face. A good instance of this is the little scene in which Langton figured, on the eve of Johnson's departure for Scotland. The Bookseller Dilly had asked some dissenting clergy to meet Johnson, and Langton, having started a religious difficulty as to the Trinity, received a public rebuke from the Sage, at which he was so offended that he left town without calling on him. The scene took place, as we are told, on May 7th. That the estrangement was a serious one is evident from the way in which Johnson referred to it during the Tour and succeeding months of the year. Yet, strange to say, we find Johnson, him, and Boswell walking together from the dinner-party to the Club, and discussing Goldsmith and other subjects together. And, more curious still, on the Sunday following the Sage actually dined with the offended Langton! Mr. Croker's behaviour

in presence of this difficulty is truly characteristic. It seems Johnson having a few days later made merry on the subject of Langton's getting Mr. Chambers to prepare his will (when he roared down Fleet Street, in the amusing and graphic style described by Boswell), Mr. Croker here finds one of his dark mysteries ;

"It is certain that the friendship of 'twenty years' standing' between Johnson and Langton, suffered, about this time, a serious interruption. Johnson chose to attribute it to the reproof he had lately given Langton at Mr. Dilly's table ; but, as they all dined together next day at Langton's own house, in apparent good humour, it is more probable *that it arose from this affair of the will.*

"Mr. Chambers may have been offended at the mode in which Johnson treated their common friend. It is absurd to think that he could have felt any displeasure on his own part. Even by Boswell's account, nothing could be less '*playful*' than Johnson's tone, *and the mention of a legacy*, here and in a subsequent letter, *makes me suspect that there was some personal disappointment at the bottom of this strange obstreperous and sour merriment.*"

Anything more ludicrously far-fetched, or, indeed, utterly astray, cannot be conceived. Johnson, indeed, two months later, deploring Langton's "huff," asks, "Where is now my legacy?"—an exclamation that

does not imply knowledge, but the resigning of all hope. Neither was it likely that the offended Langton, or the lawyer that drew the will, would confide to Johnson that his name had been omitted. But the question of the dining with "the testator" after the *fracas* is certainly perplexing, and, after trying all manner of solutions, the reader finds it vain to reconcile the contradiction. Strange to say, it is Mr. Croker himself, who, from a letter to Mrs. Thrale, supplies the solution. There, Johnson mentions the dinner as having taken place on May 19th, not on the 7th, as Boswell puts it; and that Johnson is right, Croker contrives to show by an allusion to the death of the Queen of Denmark, which took place on the 10th. This makes all clear; for thus Johnson dined with Langton, and had his joke at the will, *before* their quarrel. Boswell, as in other instances, had shifted or confused his notes. But, with all so clear, Croker tells us "he cannot reconcile the dates."

It may be mentioned that here Boswell showed his usual want of tact. For:

"We talked of one of our friends," says he, when they were at Aberdeen, "taking ill for a length of time a hasty expression of Johnson's on his introducing in a mixed company a religious subject so unseasonably as to provoke a rebuke." It will be seen in what an awkward

way this is put—the "friend's" behaviour being set in an unfavourable light. Langton would seem to have protested, denying that he had introduced it; and Boswell had thus to reshape the sentence: "on his attempting to *prosecute* what had a reference to religion beyond the bounds within which the Doctor thought," &c.

§ *That Johnson showed more Self Interest than Filial Affection on the occasion of his Mother's Death.*

Boswell mentions that, on old Michael Johnson's death, his son's affection for his mother "was so warm and liberal, that he took upon himself a debt of hers, which, though small," &c. He wrote to the creditor asking for time, adding that "he looked upon this and the future interest on the mortgage as his own debt;" and further, "Do not mention it to my dear mother." This thoughtful filial act is quite intelligible. But let us hear Croker:—

"Dr. Johnson was no doubt an affectionate son, and even to indifferent persons the most charitable of men; but the praises which Boswell lavishes on this particular affair are uncalled for, as the debt was hardly so much Johnson's mother's as his own. It has already appeared that he had something of his father's property to expect after his mother's

death; this was the house in Lichfield, which was, it seems, mortgaged to Mr. Levett: by the non-payment of the interest Levett would have been entitled to get possession of the property; and in that case Johnson would have lost his reversion, so that he very justly says that 'he looks upon this and the future interest on the mortgage as *his own debt*.' (!)

Anything more unfair or far-fetched cannot be conceived. He is even more astray in his facts. The idea of "foreclosing" for twelve guineas, or that anything would be lost by such foreclosure, is ludicrous. Not one reader out of hundreds would suppose that Johnson was thinking of saving his valuable reversion. But let us go on.

"In 1759, in the month of January," says Boswell, "his mother died, at the great age of ninety, an event which deeply affected him; not that 'his mind had acquired no firmness by the contemplation of mortality;' but that his reverential affection for her was not abated by years, as indeed he retained all his tender feelings even to the latest period of his life." This is in allusion to a statement of Hawkins'.

But, says Croker, "Mr. Boswell contradicts Hawkins, for the mere pleasure, as it would seem, of doing so. The reader must observe that Mr. Boswell's work is full of anecdotes of Johnson's want of firmness in contemplating mortality."

Again, the misapprehension of the point here is surprising. Boswell is not denying that Johnson habitually "had acquired no firmness," &c., but affirms that the *special cause* on this occasion of his being affected was his love for his parent. Not content with this, he is then prompted to make a discovery:—

"Though Johnson *may have been in theory an affectionate son, there is reason to fear* that he had never visited Lichfield, and, consequently, not seen his mother, since 1737. Mr. Boswell alleges as an excuse that he was engaged in literary labours, which confined him to London. Such an excuse for an absence of *twenty years* is idle; besides, it is stated that Johnson visited Ashbourne about 1740, Tunbridge Wells in 1748, Oxford in 1754."

Boswell states that Johnson regretted that he had not seen his mother for *several* years before her death, as he was engaged in the struggle to keep body and soul together. Mr. Croker's "reason to fear"—*i.e.*, to hope, for the sake of his theory—has no existence, and his twenty years is assumption and, indeed, incredible; for he cannot see that these very visits to Oxford, Tunbridge, &c., on pleasure, prove, in the case of a conscientious man like Johnson, that where duty required he was likely to obey. The most ill-conditioned abandoned scoundrel would not be *twenty years* without seeing his mother.

§ *That the Rev. Mr. Strahan published Johnson's Prayers in a Mode that was contrary to his wishes.*

Johnson, it is well known, shortly before his death, proposed making a collection of family prayers for publication. This scheme he spoke of to Dr. Adams, adding (the Doctor says), "that he would in earnest set about it. But I find upon inquiry that no papers of this sort were left behind him, except a few short ejaculatory forms suitable to his present situation." Commenting on this, Mr. Boswell says, "Dr. Adams had not then received accurate information on this subject: for it has since appeared that various prayers had been composed by him at different periods, which, intermingled with pious resolutions and some short notes of his life, were entitled by him, 'Prayers and Meditations,' and have, in pursuance of his earnest requisition, in the hopes of doing good, been published, with a judicious well-written preface, by the Rev. Mr. Strahan, to whom he delivered them. This admirable collection, to which I have frequently referred," &c.

To this Mr. Strahan Mr. Croker seems to have taken a rooted dislike. And first he takes exception to Boswell's account. "There are some errors," he says, "in the foregoing statement relative to the '*Prayers and Meditations*,' which,—considering the effect of that publication on Dr. Johnson's character,

and *Boswell's* zealous claims to accuracy in all such matters—are rather strange.”—Thus we are beginning to scent a mystery.—“Indeed, it seems as if *Boswell* had read either too hastily, or *not at all*, the preface to *Dr. Strahan's* book. In the first place (*a*), the collection was not made, as *Mr. Boswell* seems to suppose, by *Dr. Johnson* himself; nor (*b*) did *he* give it the designation of ‘*Prayers and Meditations* ;’ nor (*c*) do the original papers bear any appearance of being intended for the press—quite the contrary! *Dr. Strahan's* preface is not so clear on this point as it ought to have been; but even from it we learn that whatever *Johnson's* intentions may have been, as to revising and collecting for publication his own prayers, or (as the extract just quoted rather proves) *composing a system of prayer*; he in fact did nothing of the kind; but at most placed (*inter moriendum*) a confused mass of papers in *Dr. Strahan's* hands; and from the inspection of the papers themselves, it is quite evident that *Dr. Strahan* thought proper to weave into one work materials that were never intended to come together, and were not and never could have been intended for publication. This consideration is important.”

Now, as to (*a*), *Boswell* does not say that the collection was made by *Johnson*. Nor does he make the statements (*b*) and (*c*) imputed; in fact, it is only some strange distortion of mind that could prevent



any one seeing that Boswell *had* read Strahan's statement. But, as is usual with our critic, his theory has blinded him, and made him confound two distinct things. Johnson had originally intended making a selection of *other persons'* prayers, adding a few of his own. He grew agitated as he talked of it to Adams and Boswell, but said he knew not what time God would allow him in this world. This was a different plan altogether from the publication of his own private prayers. In that affecting scene, of Johnson's agitation ("Let me alone, I am overpowered;" "and then he put his hands before his face," &c.), Mr. Croker only sees a misstatement. "Yet," he says, as if convicting Johnson, "he had at this time composed all the prayers which Mr. Strahan afterwards published," he goes on, "as he stated"—now Strahan is telling an untruth—"by Dr. Johnson's *express desire*; I am satisfied unwarrantably." Thus, it will be seen Johnson, Boswell,—all the parties concerned excepting Croker—have stated what is *not*. It is wonderful he did not use his favourite phrase in the *Review*, "a more monstrous falsehood was never penned."

But, in truth, Mr. Croker is hopelessly wrong in every part of this transaction; his assertion that Strahan inserted the facts about Johnson's life without authority, is disposed of by Strahan's own modest preface, in which he states that Johnson in-

tended adding an account of his own life; and also, by the fact that [the prayers *arise* out of the biographical incidents, are part of each transaction, and could not be divorced.

§ *That Johnson was only Eighteen Months at Oxford.*

An interesting question, which has been rather warmly contested of late, is the length of time Johnson remained at Oxford. "Compelled," says Boswell, "by irresistible necessity, he left the college in autumn of 1731 without a degree, *having been a member of it little more than three years.*" Mr. Croker, however, had been in communication with Dr. Hall. "Boswell assumes," he says, "that the years 1729, 1730, and 1731, were all spent, with only the usual interruption of vacations, at Oxford; but an examination of the college books proves that Johnson, who entered on the 31st October, 1728, remained there to the 12th December, 1729, when he personally left the college, and never returned, though his name remained on the books till 8th October, 1731." Dr. Hill, who is very learned in Johnsonian history, and has brought much critical sagacity to bear on the matter, gives his whole support to Croker's view, and pronounces Boswell to be wrong.\*

\* See "Dr. Johnson, his Friends, &c.," recently published.

Now, in the first place, Boswell spoke, as indeed he always spoke, after having gone to the best sources of information. He mentions in several places having put his friend "to the question" on the subject of his early years, and of the latter having promised to confide to him all he knew. He examined, as it might be called, Johnson's college friends, Dr. Adams and Dr. Taylor, and, it may be presumed, Edwards. Hawkins, one of Johnson's oldest friends and his chosen executor, fixes the three years' residence in the most positive terms. Indeed, it must have struck every reader that all that is recorded of Johnson's position at Oxford must have taken a longer period than fourteen months to mature. His intimates seem to have accepted the statement, while it was reserved for Mr. Croker to offer this new theory, founding it not "on the authority of the College books," which seems to convey the idea of formal entries of his departure, &c., but on the certain argument connected with blanks and inscription of the name, all of a rather speculative character.

Now what does this curiously fitful system of entry amount to—this insertion and removal of a name? According to Dr. Hill it is all formal. Johnson had left the University, and his name was merely retained "on the books" on the chance of his returning. Surely, if this were so, the buttery steward or accountant would dismiss all thought of "Sam

Johnson" from his mind, and not burden himself with more writing and erasure. Does not the insertion of the name—a charge of 5*d.* here, an "0*s.* 0*d.*" there, an omission of the name for six months, a steady recurrence in the next few months—does not all this system of entry signify the presence of the student at the College; though there must be something odd and exceptional in his mode of obtaining support?

Now, to see what the record of the "Battels" tells us—a copy of which is given in my recent edition of "Boswell." I will just first state in detail what I believe were Johnson's proceedings at the close of 1729. After the thirteen or fourteen months which it is admitted he remained, he returned home, just after Christmas Day. We find him back at Oxford again on January 2nd, and on January 30th, when his debt to the Buttery is but 5*d.* His name is entered *every week* regularly from this time forth. The name is not at the head of a column to itself, where it has been left un erased, but written down afresh as each week came round, and in March has the charges of 4*s.* 7*d.* and 5*d.* set opposite to it. So it continues for nearly the whole year until November 27th, when it is removed for two months, but on January 29th, 1731, it is set down, to disappear once more until March 12th arrives, when it is once more regularly entered every week until October 1st, 1731, when it finally disappears; thus, it should be noted, making up

almost exactly the three years' period fixed by Hawkins. Surely, as was before remarked, these repeated charges for the "eating score" irresistibly convey the conclusion that Johnson was attending, in some capricious and irregular fashion—now paying his score, now owing for it, or now having it paid for him, with occasional absences from the College. In truth, the entries for the month of January, 1730, alone, dispose of arguments drawn from the commons or "Battels." These run :

	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
January 2nd . . . . .	0	5
January 9th . . . . .	0	0
January 23rd . . . . .	0	0
January 30th . . . . .	0	5

Now if "Battels" are to be the evidence of residence, how is it explained that Johnson was in residence, and subsisting for a week on five penny-worth of battels, and during the two following weeks was not charged for anything? \*

\* The following interesting letter from Professor Chandler, of Pembroke College, furnishes us with more light on this curious question. "I have looked," he writes, "through the large and greasy volumes (of the 'Battels') again, with your Boswell's 'Johnson' open before me. There are some misprints in that note :—For Feb. 14th, 8*s.*, read 7*s.* 10*d.* ; between Oct. 17th and Oct. 31st of 1729, insert Oct. 24th, 8*s.*; for [1730, N. S.] Jan. 30th, 5*d.*, read [1730, N. S.] Jan. 2nd, 5*d.*; Jan. 9th, 0*s.* 0*d.* ; Jan. 16, 0*s.* 0*d.*; Jan. 23rd, 0*s.* 0*d.* ; Jan. 30th, 5*d.* It may also be noted that on Sept. 18th, 1730, there is an entry against Johnson's name, but the total is not carried out into the margin ; in other words, nothing appears to be charged to him.

"Now as to your question. All the names of (as I suppose) all the

Dr. Hill has discovered a document of almost pathetic interest, a minute claiming £7 caution money of Johnson as a set-off to a similar amount owing by him for Commons. It is not probable that this sum would have exactly, and to the shilling, balanced Johnson's debt, and we may fairly assume that much more was owing. I would assume that the money entries show

members of the college are written down afresh every week. They are written down the left-hand page of an opening on red lines, which run right across the left and right-hand page. After most of the names are small charges in shillings, pence, and farthings, written in a hand of the sixteenth century, at the latest—a curious bit of survival—and then on the extreme right of the right-hand page sums are entered in the usual three columns of account. A week's names occupy two openings of the book.

"Again, there seems to be nothing special or peculiar about Johnson's name. Many other names are, so far as I can see, treated very much in the same manner. They are entered with no charges against them; they are sometimes omitted, and afterwards restored. The scribe was not, I suppose, always accurate.

"If you were to look at these fusty tomes for yourself, I think you would see that very little is to be made out of them, except this, that the intention always was to put down the names of all the members of the college every week, and that occasionally errors were committed. Nobody now knows for certain what the sums entered against the names mean. It is not easy to believe that half-a-dozen men should have battels of exactly the same sum; and yet it often happens that three, four, or more names, have precisely the same small sums charged against them in the same week. It sometimes happens that a number of names have entries against them, and yet nothing is carried into the account column on the right-hand page. Oddly enough, my eye never once fell on Whitfield's name. I cannot say that it is not there—but I certainly never saw it.

"A minute study might perhaps throw some light on the question of Johnson's residence; but I have not time to indulge in that at present. I saw the name 'Fludger' (*sic*) several times during the last year examined. Whether this was 'Phil Fludyer' or not, I cannot say."

cash paid by Johnson, or at the least, an account for which Johnson held himself liable, and that where it was merely entered without figures, credit was being given to him. And here comes in Mr. Elwin's speculation, which Dr. Hill does not accept, and which, however, seems to point in the direction of the true solution of the matter—viz., that Johnson's commons were not defrayed by himself, but were put to the account of some other person—paid for by his College itself or by some friend. "The friend to whom he had trusted," says Boswell, "deceived him. His debts at College were increasing." And, indeed, in these entries there is piteous evidence of the straits to which he was reduced, his weekly orders descending from 12s. and 8s. to 5s. 7d., 4s. 7d., and finally to the stray 5d., perhaps for a pot of beer. And here may be referred to another odd suggestion of Mr. Croker's, quite inconsistent with his argument.

"Talking of wine, Johnson said, 'I did not leave off wine because I could not bear it; I have drunk three bottles of port without being the worse for it. University College has witnessed this.'"

On which Mr. Croker—

"Probably on some occasion during his *first* residence at Oxford, as an under-graduate. It could hardly have happened during his visit in 1754; and certainly not in any of the subsequent ones."

But certainly yes. What, the poor starved student,

with his entries of "5*d.*," and of five or six shillings for the whole week! Johnson was many times at Oxford during his wine-drinking days.

It is to be noticed that when Boswell records authoritatively the circumstances of distress he does not take them from Hawkins. Indeed, it is extraordinary how this statement of those who knew and had warrant for their statements as to Johnson's eleemosynary position at the University are supported, Hawkins telling us that Mr. Corbet was to pay for his support, while Boswell heard from Dr. Taylor that a "gentleman of Shropshire undertook to support him as his companion, though he, in fact, never received any assistance whatever from that gentleman." Here are two distinct pieces of evidence, yet Mr. Croker finds objection to the story in the fact that this Shropshire gentleman had entered twenty months before Johnson came, surely no substantial weakening of the tale, as Boswell says nothing of entering the College with the gentleman; and the undertaking could have been given whether the gentleman had preceded or attended Johnson to College.

Another series of objections is founded on the accounts of those who were Johnson's contemporaries at Pembroke College—Dr. Adams, Dr. Taylor, and one Edwards. Boswell met all three, and was on a visit to the two first at Oxford and



Ashbourne. When he was extracting information from Dr. Adams—"pumping" him *more suo*—would we not expect the Doctor to have said something of this sort, "The fact is, my dear sir, there is but little to tell you, Johnson stayed with us so short a time—in fact, went away when his first year was out."

This would certainly be an obvious remark, but, instead, we have the fullest details and the assurance that Johnson remained three years!

Nothing is clearer than that Boswell applied his favourite process of "putting to the question" to both Johnson's old University friends, and thus extracted all that they had to tell.

"We then went to Pembroke College," he says, "and waited on his old friend Dr. Adams, the master of it, whom I found to be a most polite, pleasing, *communicative* man. Before his advancement to the headship of his college, I had intended to go and visit him at Shrewsbury in order to get from him what particulars he could recollect of Johnson's academical life. He now obligingly gave me part of that authentic information, which, with what I afterwards owed to his kindness, will be found incorporated in its proper place in this work."

And again: "By asking a great variety of particulars, I have obtained additional information. I followed the same mode with the Rev. Dr. Taylor,

in whose presence I wrote down a good deal of what he could tell, and he, at my request, signed his name to give it authenticity."

Does not the conviction come on us irresistibly that, with these two witnesses thus searchingly examined, the time of Johnson's stay must have been extracted? Indeed, who can read the accounts of Johnson's several visits to Oxford, his meetings with old friends, his recognition of old familiar spots, the affectionate sense of remembrance, his reception by friends, and imagine that this was all based on but fourteen months' visit? "You cannot imagine," writes Hannah More, "with what delight he showed me every part of his own college . . . He would let no one show me but himself: 'This was my room, this Shenstone's. Here we walked, there we played at cricket.'"

Again, in March, 1772, Boswell pressed his friend to tell him "all the little circumstances of his life, what schools he attended, *when he came to Oxford, &c.*; and Johnson did not disapprove his curiosity, and proposed to tell him by degrees. In short, what forces itself on us, is that this stay at Oxford must have been considered by Boswell in the most formal manner, and with abundant opportunities for getting at the truth. These were: 1st, Johnson himself; 2nd, Johnson's friends and "fellow collegians, Taylor, Adams, and Edwards;" 3rd, Oxford University itself, where Boswell was on a visit.

Now, that Johnson gratified his curiosity is certain (as there are details in Boswell's account not found elsewhere), and if Boswell pressed him to tell when "*he came to Oxford*," we may be sure the same curious inquirer would have been as eager to learn when he left it.

Dr. Adams assured Boswell that in 1731 Mr. Jorden (who had been Johnson's tutor) quitted the College, and his pupils were transferred to Adams, so that, had Johnson returned, Dr. Adams *would have been his tutor*. "Dr. Adams," adds Boswell, "said to me at Oxford, in 1776, 'I was his nominal tutor, but he was above my mark.'" Now, such a statement as this is intelligible, and would only have been made with knowledge. Yet Mr. Croker, with his extraordinary power of misapprehension, says that there is an obvious discrepancy between Boswell's and Dr. Adams' statements, and Dr. Adams never was, *in any sense*, Johnson's tutor. Dr. Adams had explained to Boswell the meaning of the phrase "nominal" tutor as "tutor to be," or, more technically, "tutor on the books." But there is another view of the matter. Dr. Hill asserts that Boswell's account of Johnson's career is taken from Hawkins, but a little consideration will show that they are independent accounts, and that Boswell was more inclined to reject—or, at least, correct—any statement of Hawkins that he could thus deal with. It is thus that he

corrects him as to Adams being Johnson's tutor. "Jorden," says Hawkins, "went off to a living upon giving a bond to resign it in favour of a minor, and Johnson became a pupil of Dr. Adams's." It may be added in this place that Croker tells us that he was assured by Dr. Hall that the Oxford pupils had no special tutor, but that the tutor of one was the tutor of all. Dr. Adams was no more his tutor than Jorden was, or *vice versâ*. Now, if this be correct, we receive a little light here in reconciling what seems so inconsistent—viz., the declarations of Dr. Adams, "I was his nominal tutor," &c., with that of Boswell, that he never was under Dr. Adams. Boswell's declaration would simply mean, what Dr. Hall says, that Johnson was never *especially* under Adams, but when Jorden left, Adams *would* have been, sole tutor. Thus, too, Adams' statement, "I was his nominal tutor," becomes intelligible.

"Then," goes on Dr. Hill, "both Mr. Croker and Mr. Fitzgerald should have tried to find out when it was that Adams took Jorden's place. Jorden's fellowship was filled up, as I have ascertained, on December 23, 1730." He was appointed to a living much earlier—in March, 1729—but, if he did not vacate his fellowship till December, 1730, we may fairly assume that he continued to perform the duties. This would have been during the Christmas vacation, so that Adams did not become sole tutor till 1731,

in which year Johnson left. So that, with the autumn vacation, there would only remain a few months for Johnson to receive Dr. Adams' instruction. But, in truth, Johnson was not a regular pupil of any professor. He says of Jorden, "I did not attend him much," so that, on the whole, a consistent explanation will be the following: There were the two tutors for the whole college, one of whom went away after about two years of Johnson's course was completed. Dr. Adams, the tutor that remained, *had been* hitherto his nominal tutor, as he told Boswell, and did not consider that the few months of Johnson's stay, during which he was sole tutor, hardly entitled him to give himself the credit of being Johnson's instructor. This, it will be found, will fit with Boswell's, Hawkins', and Dr. Hall's account, though perhaps not with Dr. Hill's theory.

All readers will recall the graphically described meeting of Johnson and Edwards in Butcher Row in the year 1778. "I was accosted," says Johnson, in the "Prayers and Meditations," "by Edwards, an old fellow-collegian, who had not seen me *since* 1729." "This deliberate assertion of Johnson's," wrote Mr. Croker—that he had not seen Edwards since 1729—"is confirmation of the opinion that Johnson did not return after Christmas, 1729." It must be confessed that this rather "strong fact" comes in aid of this theory, but it is not so strong as it appears. For 1st., Boswell,

who was present at the meeting, tells us that it was Edwards who "brought to Johnson's recollection their having been"—not their having parted—"at Oxford nine and forty years ago." And 2nd, this view is confirmed by its being the very year in which Edwards came to the College. This, he did in the month of June, 1729, so that his intimacy with Johnson, if the latter departed at Christmas, could have only lasted six months.

And now, what impression is left by Johnson's own mode of always speaking of his College? There is a pride, a knowledge of persons and things that could only come of long and intimate acquaintance. "We were a nest of singing birds," he said. Before his death he had thoughts of leaving to it his house at Lichfield, and he took a pleasure in boasting of the many eminent men it had educated. It was the happiest time of his life, Dr. Adams said. He once said, "The history of my Oxford exploits all lies between Taylor and Adams." And all this was founded on a residence of fourteen months! From which, too, must be deducted some months of the two vacations.

Then comes the difficulty about Whitfield. Johnson told Boswell that they had been at college together, that "he knew him before he began to be better than other people." Now Whitfield did not enter college until the end of 1732, a year after Johnson had left,

according to Boswell, or three according to the "short term" writers. No explanation has been attempted of this contradiction, but, if worth anything, it makes something for the theory that brings the periods of Johnson's and Whitfield's stay closer together. The only solution that can be offered is that Boswell's phrase—Johnson's phrase is "was at the same college with him"—might be a loose way of saying that both had been *of* the same college, and that Boswell had assumed that this meant "fellow collegian," a phrase he uses later: or that Johnson "knowing him before he became good" referred to some period before Whitfield came to the University: or to some later time, when Johnson was visiting Oxford, when Whitfield *had* become "good." This, however, is but a desperate and strained explanation. What is clear is that Johnson declared that he *knew* Whitfield, to all appearance, *at* Oxford. The mistake must be in some of the other details.

It may be remarked here that Mr. Croker, with other writers, is fond of dismissing a story altogether because there is an inconsistency in some details, a good specimen of which is the one relating to the visit of Dr. Sacheverel, when, we are told, the child Sam Johnson, then three years old, was held up on his father's shoulders at the Cathedral, and was observed, says a Lichfield lady, "by my grandfather Hammond gaping and listening. He was asked how he could think of

bringing such an infant to the Church and in the midst of so great a crowd, &c.?"

Now let us hear Mr. Croker: "The gossiping anecdotes of the Lichfield ladies are all apocryphal." Sacheverel, it seems, was then interdicted from preaching, so he could not have been at the Cathedral. But he "indeed made a triumphal progress through the Midland counties and visited Lichfield in 1710, when he was received in State by the Corporation and addressed, &c., but then Johnson was only one year or two old. All apocryphal! Surely the point of the story is the eagerness of the infant—his being lifted on his father's shoulder to see the celebrated divine, the crowd, and danger from the crowd. The preaching, cathedral, &c., are all non-essential.

There are the minor points which support the same contention; such as the statement, "The first time," as Warton, who attended Johnson diligently at Oxford, tells us, "*of his being at Oxford, after quitting the University, was in 1754.*" Now, we know, even if Johnson quitted in 1729, that he is found visiting the place in January, 1730, in March, and in September. The argument from Taylor's stay, and from Whitfield's residence, tells in a most perplexing way against both sides of the argument. So I need not enter on them here. But enough has been said to place the whole question fairly before the reader.



§ *Miscellaneous Errors and Mysteries.*

*The Watch Mystery.* — This bore the inscription, “*νξ γαρ ερχεται*,” the first words of our Saviour’s solemn admonition; which Johnson ceased wearing because, as he explained in answer to Boswell’s question, it might be censured as ostentatious; *i.e.*, an ostentation of piety. But Mr. Croker scents mystery:—

“I know not why Boswell calls them the *first* words; on the contrary, they are expletive of the former part of the admonition. Hawkins says that this watch was the first he ever possessed; but he adds, that the Greek inscription was made unintelligible by the mistake of inscribing *νμζ* for *νξ*. This Mr. Steevens denied; and he certainly bequeathed to his niece a watch bearing, as I am informed, the *correct* inscription; but from the evidence of Hawkins, one of Johnson’s executors, and from the known propensity of Steevens to what is leniently called *mystification*, I conclude his was not the *original* dial. However that may be, the dial was laid aside by Johnson, as being, Boswell says, ‘too ostentatious,’ and Hawkins, ‘too pedantic.’ But Johnson may have had a better reason, even if *νξ* were not misspelled. Giving the inscription, no doubt from memory, he had altered the divine phrase, which is

simply ἐρχεται νυξ, and Johnson, when he perceived the variance, probably removed the dial."

See all the assumptions! Steevens declares that the inscription was always engraved correctly (Mr. Boswell supports the view), but he is assumed to be telling an untruth; and suspected of passing off another dial as Johnson's. But Boswell tells us positively, that "Mr. Steevens is now possessed of the dial-plate inscribed as above." So Croker's insinuation would seem to be that Steevens passed off a false dial as Johnson's. The assumption as to Johnson—in the face of his own reason—is equally gratuitous.

*The Apple-Dumplings Puzzle.*—We must not forget the clergyman, whom the mention of orchards suggested to Johnson: "He advised me, if possible, to have an orchard. He knew, he said, a clergyman of small income, who brought up a family very respectably, which he chiefly fed with apple dumplings." And many a poor curate might rejoice to thus nurture his family. But what says Croker:

"*This seems strange.* I suppose," he adds, "Boswell, at the interval of so many years, did not perfectly recollect Johnson's statement." He evidently thinks the dumplings were their *sole* support. Johnson said "chiefly," meaning that the dumplings helped out the scanty fare. But one is ashamed to pause, and discuss such things.

*The Gordon Riots.*—In Johnson's account sent to Mrs. Thrale, occurs a comic allusion "to 70,000 Scots, who are coming to London to eat us, or hang us, or drown us." "Mr. Boswell seems not to have relished this allusion to a Scottish invasion, and, instead of laughing, as Johnson appears to have done, at this absurd rumour, chose to omit the passage altogether." Thus Croker.

Now, Johnson's graphic story is *selected* by Boswell from a number of letters; and even the passages selected are only the most effective bits of particular paragraphs. The Scotch allusion has a number of sentences coming before and after it, and all are omitted together.

*The Pistol.*—In April, 1779, a dispute arose between Johnson and Beauclerk, on Hackman's killing Miss Ray. "Johnson argued, that his being furnished with two pistols was a proof that he meant to shoot two persons. Mr. Beauclerk said, 'No. . . . Mr. —, who loved buttered muffins, but durst not eat them because they disagreed with his stomach, resolved to shoot himself; and then he eat three buttered muffins for breakfast, before shooting himself, knowing that he should not be troubled with indigestion; *he* had two charged pistols; one was found lying charged upon the table by him, after he had shot himself with the other.'—'Well,' said Johnson, with an air of triumph, 'you see here one pistol

was sufficient.' Beauclerk replied smartly, 'Because it happened to kill him.' "

On this, Mr. Croker declares that, "It was thought that Mr. Damer (whose suicide is recorded in the 'Gentleman's Magazine' for 1776, p. 383), was here meant; but I have since ascertained that it was Johnson's old friend, Mr. Fitzherbert, who terminated his own life."

"It was thought;" by whom? "I have since ascertained;" how, and from whom? Croker, where he has authorities, always furnishes them, and no delicacy to the family can be the reason for suppression, as he gives the name which was before obscure. In the absence of proof, it may be said that from the context, Mr. Fitzherbert cannot be intended. Fitzherbert was an intimate friend of Johnson's, and Beauclerk, it will be seen, communicates the details of his end, as if unknown and a novelty to Johnson. But, some years before, Boswell, discussing suicide with Johnson, tells us, "We talked of the melancholy end of a gentleman, who had destroyed himself." "It was owing," says Johnson, "to imaginary difficulties in his affairs, &c.," alluding, Mr. Croker says, to this very catastrophe. This showed that Johnson knew all about him. Angry words between Johnson and Beauclerk arose out of this heated discussion, which is as intelligible, as anything of the kind in ordinary life; but which Mr. Croker strangely traces

up, not to Beauclerk's just retorts, which nettled, but to a *deeper* cause: "This correction is so far important, that perhaps Mr. Beauclerk's levity in mentioning *an event which was probably very painful to Johnson*, may have disposed him to the subsequent, and, in such case, excusable asperity."

Nothing more far-fetched could be imagined; Johnson talked of all subjects—the most painful without reticence.

*The Whig's Fire-place.*—Warton, describing Johnson's visit to Oxford, says: "Once, in our way home, we viewed the ruins of the abbeys of Oseney and Rewley, near Oxford. After at least half-an-hour's silence, Johnson said, 'I viewed them with indignation!' We had then a long conversation on Gothic buildings; and in talking of the form of old halls, he said, 'In these halls, the fire-place was anciently always in the middle of the room, till the Whigs removed it on one side.'"

This sally referred to old halls generally, suggested by the ruined abbeys. The "vile Whigs," authors of all evil changes, according to Johnson, were accountable for this one also. The distempered brain of Croker, which saw everything directly or indirectly in connection with politics, engenders the following extraordinary speculation:—

"*What can this mean?* What had the Whigs to do with removing the smoky hearths from the centre

of the great halls to a more commodious chimney at the side? And there are hundreds of very ancient halls with their chimneys in the sides. Johnson was either joking, or he alluded to some particular circumstances which Warton omitted to notice. I have since found that my conjecture was right, and that Johnson alluded to an alteration of the hall of University College, which made some noise at the time; and, I suppose, was effected by some college authorities, *who happened to be Whigs.*"

The gravity and self-complacency in discovering that "some particular circumstance" had occurred, is delicious. But it is worth noting, how, as is his habit, he tries by a curious exaggeration to support his rickety story. "I found that Johnson alluded." No. He only found that such an alteration had taken place; and to this he infers that Johnson alluded. Neither does he say that this alteration had anything to do with the fire-place; and, finally, he has to *suppose* that the authorities were Whigs.

*Why Lord Errol not entitled to respect.*—Speaking of Lord Errol, Boswell says, "I come of good birth, and I could, with the most perfect honesty, expatiate on Lord Errol's good qualities; but he stands in no need of my praise. His agreeable manners, and softness of address, prevented that constraint which the idea of his being Lord High Constable of Scotland might otherwise have occasioned."

This "constraint," Mr. Croker says, need not have been felt, on the strange ground that this nobleman was not at the time entitled to bear his honours. The great family of the Hays must have been amused as they read this :

"Mr. Boswell need not have been in such awe on *this* account; for Lord Errol's title to that dignity was, at this period, not quite established. He not only was not descended from the Earls of Errol, in the *male* line, but the right of his mother and grandmother rested on the *nomination* of Gilbert, the tenth Earl of Errol. Lord Lauderdale, at the election of the Scottish peers in 1796, protested against Lord Errol's claim to the peerage, questioning not only the right of conferring a peerage by *nomination*, but denying that any such nomination had been in fact made; but the House of Lords decided that the earldom had become descendable to females, and also that Earl Gilbert had acquired and exercised the right of nomination. It was still more doubtful how the office of Hereditary High Constable could be transferred, either by nomination or through females; but all the late Earls of Errol have enjoyed it without question, and the present Earl executed it by deputy at the coronation of George IV., and in person during his Majesty's visit to Scotland in 1822."

Such is this extraordinary note. It will be seen that the technical question of right, such as it was,

was not raised for more than twenty years after the interview! So that Boswell could have no possibility of having his "awe" constrained. But then, it turns out, he was rightfully in possession of his rank. So that Boswell's "constraint" was justified.

*Suppression of Lady Di. Middleton's name.*—Johnson, in his letters to Mrs. Thrale, describing his Scotch tour, recounts, that when in church at Aberdeen, he had been "espied by Lady Di. Middleton," who told Mr. Boyd, and hence was owing the invitation to Lord Errol's. Mr. Boyd, who was Lord Errol's brother, it seems knew Boswell's father, and also reminded Dr. Johnson of having met him in London. Boswell is careful to explain this to the reader, to show that their position as guests was on sufficient foundation. Full as all this is, Mr. Croker seems to hint at something secretly kept back; and asks in reference to the lady's share, "*Why did Boswell not mention her?*"

*Johnson's Scruples.*—When Johnson was in Paris, "The introducer," he says, "came to us—civil to me—Presenting—I had scruples—Not necessary—We went and saw the king and queen at dinner—We saw the other ladies at dinner."

In this simple passage, our commentator scents a mystery. It lay in the word "*scruples.*" It was not conscious guilt this time. "It is an etiquette generally insisted on to present at foreign courts those



only who had been presented to their own sovereign at home. Johnson had never been publicly presented to George III., though he had had that honour in private, and may, therefore, have entertained *scruples* whether he was entitled to be presented to the King of France; but those scruples were in this case not necessary, the rule applying only to *formal presentations* at court, and not to admission to see the king dine."

The idea of such a fantastic notion troubling Johnson! He did not use the word in its technical sense. He meant that he had "doubts" about the matter. Such presentation too was by the English Minister.

*Ludicrous Display of Military Spirit.*—"My friend, Colonel James Stuart," says the impulsive Boswell, grateful for certain hospitality, "second son of the Earl of Bute, who had distinguished himself as a good officer of the Bedfordshire militia, had taken a public-spirited resolution to serve his country in its difficulties, by raising a regular regiment, and taking the command of it himself. This, in the heir of the immense property of Wortley, was highly honourable." "We cannot but *smile*," is Mr. Croker's cynical comment, "at Boswell's hyperbolic applause of his friend's heroism."

This raising a regiment for service abroad was a matter of expense and trouble. That it was attended

with risk and sacrifice for the heir of a noble house, Mr. Boswell tells us in another place : " His regiment was afterwards ordered to Jamaica, where he accompanied it, and almost lost his life by the climate. This impartial order I should think a sufficient refutation of the idle rumour that 'there was still something behind the throne greater than the throne itself.' "

The spirited officer was, therefore, entitled to "applause." No one, save the editor, will "smile" at Boswell's reasonable praise. Mr. Croker, however, is not yet done with Colonel Stuart.

"As if," he says, assuming that Lord Bute had no power; "Lord Bute's influence could have prevented his son's regiment going to Jamaica." There was nothing more likely; his own experience at the Admiralty might have furnished him with many instances.

*Curious Scientific Theory.*—BOSWELL. "Why, sir, do people play this trick which I observe now, when I look at your grate, putting the shovel against it to make the fire burn?" JOHNSON. "They play the trick, but it does not make the fire burn. *There* is a better (setting the poker perpendicularly up at right angles with the grate). In days of superstition they thought, as it made a cross with the bars, it would drive away the witch."

One would think that this housewife question was

too trivial a matter for speculation. But Mr. Croker discusses it gravely: "It certainly does make the fire burn," he quotes; "by repelling the air, it throws a blast on the fire, and so performs the part in some degree of a blower or bellows—KEARNEY. Dr. Kearney's observation applies only to the *shovel*, and even so, very imperfectly; but by those who have faith in the experiment, the *poker* is supposed to be equally efficacious. After all, it is *possible that there may be some magnetic or electrical influence which, in the progress of science, may be explained*; and what has been thought a vulgar trick, may be proved to be a philosophical expedient."

What would Dr. Tyndall say? The magnetic influence of a poker laid against the bar!

*Discovery as to Parnell.*—One of the quaintest notions in the "Life," is Boswell's submitting a legally drawn case for Dr. Johnson's opinion:

"May 3, 1779. Parnell, in his 'Hermit,' has the following passage:—

'To clear this doubt, to know the world by sight,  
To find if *books* and *swains* report it right  
(For yet by *swains alone* the world he knew,  
Whose feet came wand'ring o'er the nightly dew).'

"Is there not a contradiction in its being *first* supposed that the Hermit knew *both* what books and swains reported of the world; yet *afterwards* said, that he knew it by *swains alone*?"

"I think it," says Johnson, "an inaccuracy. He mentions two instructors in the first line, and says he had only one in the next."

Malone thought there was no ambiguity, and that the point turned on "*oral*" information, which he could have obtained only from swains. Now to hear Croker: "It is odd enough that these critics did not think it worth their while to consult the original for the exact words on which they were exercising their ingenuity. Parnell's words are *not*, '*if books AND swains*,' but, '*if books OR swains*,' which *might* mean, not that books and swains *agreed*, but that they *differed*, and that the Hermit's doubt was excited by the difference between his instructors. There is, no doubt, a clumsy ambiguity in the expression, but the meaning obviously is that, *of men*, he knew *swains only*."

Now Boswell *had* consulted the original, and in his letter of Feb. 28, 1778, had quoted the correct text! But the disjunctive makes no difference; the Hermit finding both books and swains differing, is yet declared to have known the world by swains *alone*. There was Boswell's difficulty.

*Irreverence in a Scotch Judge*.—One of the Scotch judges told Boswell to give himself no trouble about the literary style of the pleadings he drew up for them. "It was casting pearls before swine," he said. So simple a statement might pass surely as

clear and decorous. But, no; to Mr. Croker it was profane, and required explanation.

“This application of the scriptural phrase was not very becoming, but the *meaning* was correct; the *facts* and the *law* only ought to be considered by the judge—the verbal decorations of style should be of no weight. *It is probable* that the judge who used it was bantering Boswell on some pleading in which there was, perhaps, more ornament than substance (!)”

*Specimen of Indecent Behaviour.*—Under date of Sept. 1779, Boswell has a note beginning:—“It appears that Johnson, now in his sixty-eighth year, was seriously inclined to realise the project of our going up the Baltic, for he thus writes to Mrs. Thrale:” The extract and Boswell’s comment are all introduced into Croker’s text. It will be seen at once how inartistic this is, when it is stated that Boswell is here giving his correspondence in regular series with Johnson—and this is thrust in between Boswell’s letter and Johnson’s reply. “We may, perhaps, form some scheme or other,” writes Johnson of his friend; “but, in the phrase of Hockley-in-the-Hole, it is a pity he has not *a better Bottom.*” It is amusing to find that Mr. Boswell, quoting this rather uncomplimentary phrase, actually puts the words in *Italics*, so as to give better emphasis! Croker’s delicacy, however, was offended by “*a better bottom,*” so he made it more abstract and figurative by turning it into “pity

he has not *better Bottom*." This may seem over-refining, but there is a distinction. Indeed, the word seems to have been Croker's *bête noir*, for we find him protesting against it on another occasion—that of the amusing scene when Johnson made the company titter by complimenting a lady on having "a bottom of good sense." Miss Hannah More slyly hid her face. Johnson sternly amended it with, "I say the woman was fundamentally sensible." "As if he had said," adds Boswell, with one of those touches which shows he knew character well, "'Hear this, and laugh if you dare.' We all sat composed as at a funeral." Yet the Croker comment on this capital picture is, "Manners are certainly more refined than they were. Such a scene as this could hardly now occur in respectable company."

The company could not be said to have shown lack of refinement, and, indeed, the risible muscles cannot be guaranteed to obey, even in the most elegant society. The real dearth of refinement was in the mind that could take objection to such a matter. Even in the index the word is quoted as "bottom," in inverted commas, as though Mr. Croker would have nothing to say to it.

But this opens up a distinct department of our editor's dealings. As he goes along he finds it necessary, not merely to reprehend anything that appears

to him to be coarse or broad, but to suppress and alter—and alter in the most capricious way. The drollest part is the mournful way in which he moralises. “I could wish that Boswell had not reported this loose talk.”

I will now add a number of miscellaneous specimens, not so important in character, of mistakes and misapprehensions and platitudes.

“I mentioned my expectations,” says Mr. Boswell, “from the interest of an eminent person then in power; adding, ‘But I have no claim but the claim, &c.’”—1783.

“Probably Lord Mountstuart,” says Mr. Croker. The “eminent person” was Mr. Burke, just appointed to the Pay Office, and from whom Boswell had obtained a sort of promise.

“Davies,” wrote Johnson, “has got great success as an author, generated by the corruption of a Bookseller.” A happy satirical phrase, quite intelligible. But, Mr. Croker explains, “This means that Davies, from his adversity as a bookseller, had burst into new and gaudier life as an author.” It certainly does not. The corruption intended is *moral*, and Johnson would have applied the phrase had Davies *not* been bankrupt. This is shown by the original form of the phrase quoted from Dryden and others: “The corruption of a poet is the generation of a critic, &c.”

In a letter of Johnson's to Mrs. Thrale forced into the text, we find this passage:—

“Can you write such a letter as this? so miscellaneous, with such noble disdain of regularity, like Shakspeare's works? such graceful negligence of transition, like the ancient enthusiasts? The pure voice of Nature and of friendship. Now of whom shall I proceed to speak? Of whom but Mrs. Montagu? Having mentioned Shakspeare and Nature, does not the name of Montagu force itself upon me? Such were the transitions of the ancients, which now seem abrupt, because the intermediate idea is lost to modern understandings.”

Mr. Croker is much “gravelled” at this praise of a lady whom he disliked. It sets him speculating:

“Compare this with two former phrases, in which Shakspeare and Mrs. Montagu are mentioned, and wonder at the inconsistencies to which the greatest genius and the highest spirit may be reduced! Perhaps Johnson's original disposition to depreciate Mrs. Montagu may have arisen from his having heard that she thought *Rasselas* an *opiate*. His later praise was no doubt produced by her charity to Mrs. Williams. This, though it may explain, does not excuse the inconsistencies.”

It certainly does not either explain or excuse. For the passage is *purely ironical*.

This could be seen even without the passage con-



sidering her "an intermediate idea" between Nature and Shakspeare.

Mr. Akerman was the Governor of Newgate, who is described by Boswell as a remarkable man, and who won from Johnson, for his resolute behaviour during a fire at Newgate, one of the highest panegyrics he gave to anyone. He was certainly as well known, and as *répandu* as, say, the two officers who now direct the London Police and Fire Brigade respectively. Yet Boswell using so ordinary an expression as "my esteemed friend Mr. Akerman," throws Mr. Croker into one of his favourite quandaries.

"Why Mr. Boswell should call the keeper of Newgate his '*esteemed friend*' has puzzled many readers; but besides his natural desire to make the acquaintance of everybody who was eminent or remarkable, or even *notorious*, his strange propensity for witnessing executions probably brought him into more immediate intercourse with the keeper of Newgate."

"He observed that his old friend, Mr. Sheridan, had been honoured with extraordinary attention in his own country, by having had an exception made in his favour in an Irish act of parliament concerning insolvent debtors."

On which Mr. Croker says,—

"Johnson *had been misinformed*. Mr. Whyte tells us in his '*Miscellanea Nova*,' of the personal civility with which some members of a committee of the

Irish House of Commons on a bill for the relief of insolvent debtors treated Mr. Sheridan and Mr. Whyte, who appeared on his behalf, but there is no exception in the act. Sheridan's name is one of some hundreds, and has no distinction whatsoever. The favour he sought was, to be *included* in the act without being in actual custody, as he was resident in France; this he obtained, but not specially, for one hundred and twenty other persons in similar circumstances are also included. See 'Schedule to Irish Statutes,' 5 G. 3, c. 23.'

This is all wrong and misapprehended. Croker refutes what was not asserted. Johnson does not mean that in the statute will be found such an exception. The scene is given in Whyte's account, where, many compliments were paid to Sheridan, on the special application made for him. Others may have been "excepted," but not in the same handsome way. This was "the extraordinary attention" Johnson was thinking of, an exception *connected* with the Act.

"They had met," that is, Boswell and Johnson, "only thirteen days; so that the friendship was of rapid growth."

See how Mr. Croker works. He had "totted up" these days, just as he had "totted up" *all* the days of Boswell's and Johnson's intimacy. No doubt the thirteen days was correct—but the acquaintance and the days was spread over nearly three months,

which, in common parlance, would be considered the measure of his intimacy.

Johnson, writing in July 1762, to thank Lord Bute for his pension, begins his letter :—

“MY LORD,—When the bills were yesterday delivered to me by Mr. Wedderburne, I was informed by him of the future favours which his Majesty has, by your Lordship’s recommendation, been induced to intend for me.”

On which, thus sapiently, Croker :—

“It does not appear what *bills* these were; evidently something distinct from the pension, yet probably of the same nature, as the words ‘*future favours*’ seem to imply that there had been some *present* favour.”

It does not appear, to certainty, what the bills are, but they are not what it is supposed they were—cash or bills on the treasury. In the following November Johnson’s pension became first due, and he had to write to the Minister to know how he was to receive it. This was the future and only favour. The Bills were probably Acts of Parliament, which he was revising or writing on for Wedderburne; but nothing to do with money, or distinguishable from his future favours.

Johnson, inveighing against George II., mentioned that, “when an officer of high rank had been acquitted by a court martial, the King, with his own

hand, struck his name off the list." Surely the meaning of this description of an arbitrary act is quite plain. George III., in the same style, when displeased with Fox, called for the Council Book, and with his own hand struck his name out of the list. Yet, because "no instance can be traced in the War or Admiralty Offices, of any officer of high rank being struck out of the list about that period, after acquittal by a court martial," our communicator grows mysterious. "*It may be surmised that Johnson's statement, or Sir Joshua's report of it, was not quite accurate in details, and that Johnson might have alluded to the case of his friend General Oglethorpe, who, after acquittal by a court martial, was (to use a vulgar but expressive phrase) put upon the shelf.*"

But the officer, whoever he was, was dismissed from the army, and *not* put upon the shelf!

General Oglethorpe, meeting Boswell, told him that Johnson saw company on Saturday evenings, and that he would meet him there. Boswell reported this to his friend, who, sick and harassed, fell on him. "Did you tell him not to come? Am I to be *hunted* in this manner?" Boswell satisfied him that he could not divine that the visit would be inconvenient. This was plain and natural. But Croker authoritatively declares that "Johnson suspected that Boswell, with his usual officiousness, had invited Oglethorpe to this unseasonable visit. When Johnson chides his over

zealous friend for such intermeddling, Boswell, with easy complacency, can discover no cause for the reprimand but Johnson's sickness or ill-humour."

All utterly gratuitous and opposed to the narrative.

Speaking in favour of public executions, Johnson said, "the public were gratified by a procession; the criminal was supported by it." Mr. Croker asks:—

"What could Johnson mean by saying that the criminal was *supported by* the lingering torture of this cruel exhibition?"

What incredible dulness not to see that Boswell means that the excitement and publicity kept up the spirit of the prisoner. Again. "Such was the heat and irritability of his blood, that not only did he pare his nails to the quick, but scraped the joints of his fingers with a pen-knife." "I know not," says Croker, "why heat and irritability should make a man pare his nails too close." Anyone would understand this.

In a letter of Johnson's published, is an allusion to "a brother of —, a Spanish merchant. . . Very agreeable man, and speaks no Scotch." This was Boswell's brother, and his comment is, "she has omitted the name, *she best knows why.*" Mr. Croker's sapient solution runs:—

"From delicacy, perhaps, fearing that Mr. Boswell might not like to see his name coupled with the description of Scotland, as *a sorry place.*"

But what Boswell means is the compliment to his relative; and the answer to *him* is that Mrs. Piozzi suppressed nearly every name in the volumes. Another instance of the curious malignity with which Boswell pursued her! When Johnson gave Boswell all his writings in the case of Dr. Dodd, Boswell tells us that he "avoided copying what had appeared in print, and now make part of the edition published by the Booksellers of London," of which he made an abstract for his readers. This was surely a most reasonable mode, as he avoided giving what could be read elsewhere. We rub our eyes as we read Croker:—"This reserve arose from Boswell's jealousy of *copyright*, but it seems strange how they, delivered and published as they were as Dr. Dodd's, could have become subject to copyright as Dr. Johnson's."

Speaking of the reception of Johnson's *Tour*, it is said, that men praised such portions as were in their own way, Jones commending the part which treats of language, Burke that which describes the inhabitants of mountainous countries. Their "own way" surely referred to some theory of Burke's as to inhabitants of mountainous countries being fond of liberty. Croker, however, speculates that "Johnson evidently thought, either that Ireland is generally mountainous, or that Mr. Burke came from a part that was; but he was mistaken." "Mr. Romney," says Boswell, "who has now deservedly established a high

reputation." "What is a picture by Romney now worth?" asks Croker! Mrs. Thrale describes an Irishman, "a flashy friend at Bath, who was devoted to Johnson—who would shed his blood for him. Upon my honour, as Dr. Campbell's phrase is, I am but a twitter to him." Says Croker:—

"It is of no importance; but I cannot reconcile Mrs. Thrale's talking, in May, 1776, of Dr. Campbell as wholly unknown to Johnson, with Boswell's statement that they had dined together at her own and Mr. Dilly's table the preceding year."

The crop of mistakes here is amazing. In the text Johnson and Boswell are talking of Campbell. Mr. Croker says, "Mrs. Thrale, in her lively style gives a sketch of *this* gentleman," and quotes the account of the "flashy friend." This, however—mistake the first—refers to another person—Mr. Musgrave. He assumed that "On my honour, as Dr. Campbell says," was a poetic description of the same person—mistake the second. The third is, Mr. Croker's wonder at *this* Dr. Campbell being wholly unknown to Johnson.

On Friday, April 23, Johnson writes that he is going to Oxford—where he would arrive the next morning by the coach. On the following Tuesday, Boswell finds him at Bolt Court. There is no difficulty in assuming that the interval, three days, was spent at Oxford. But not so Croker. There is

mystery : "Boswell makes no mention of this excursion, which, I suppose, did not take place, as Boswell saw him in London on the 27th, and Johnson attended Boswell's election at the Club on the 30th."

Johnson, speaking of Beattie and his handsome wife, said, "he sunk upon us that he was married." On which Beattie wrote to our author, that he had never done so, and adding, it was "a circumstance of which I never was, or never can be, ashamed." Boswell inserted the *reclame* from respect and regard to "his extreme sensibility."

"There was a cause for this 'extreme sensibility,'" says our detective, "which Boswell probably did not know or had forgotten. Dr. Beattie was conscious that there was something that might give a colour to such an imputation. It became known, shortly after the date of this letter, that the mind of poor Mrs. Beattie had become deranged, and she passed the last years of her life in confinement." Anyone who reads the letter will see, even from the phrase quoted, that such a thought was not in Beattie's mind. And if such were, it would surely operate for silence.

Again, Dr. Johnson saying very naturally that he "looked with reverence" at St. John's Gateway, where his first lucubrations had been printed, Mr. Croker will not have it, and breaks out: "Johnson never could have said *seriously* that he looked at St.



John's Gate as the printing-office of Cave, with reverence. The 'Gentleman's Magazine' had been, at this time, but six years before the public, and its contents were, even when Johnson himself had contributed to improve it, not much entitled to reverence: Johnson's reverence would have been more justly excited by the recollections connected with the ancient Gate itself."

Mr. Murphy and the late Mr. Sheridan, says Boswell, severally contended for the distinction of having been the first who mentioned to Mr. Wedderburne that Johnson ought to have a pension. He adds that he asked Lord Loughborough himself who was the prime mover, and his reply was that "all his friends assisted;" thus admitting that he himself was not. Yet says Mr. Croker: "This is not correct. Mr. Murphy did not 'contest *this* distinction' with Mr. Sheridan. He claimed, we see, not the first suggestion to Lord Loughborough, but the first notice from his lordship to Johnson. His words are: 'Lord Loughborough, who, perhaps, was originally a mover in the business, had authority to mention it. He desired the author of these Memoirs to undertake the task.'"

This, it will be seen, refers only to the second stage, and is no contradiction of what Boswell says, which refers to an earlier stage of the matter.

Boswell makes a slip, saying that Rasay was oppo-

site the western coast of Skye, instead of the eastern. There can be no doubt that this is what he meant. But Mr. Croker says: "Boswell means that the eastern coast of Skye is *westward* of Rasay."

He speaks of Sir Thomas Lawrence as Sir Joshua Reynolds' "admirer and *rival*." The fact being that Sir Joshua was old and blind when Lawrence, a young man of one or two and twenty, came to town.

"Patriotism having become one of our topics, Johnson suddenly uttered, in a strong determined tone, an apophthegm, at which many will start:— 'Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel.' But, let it be considered, that he did not mean a real and generous love of our country, but that pretended patriotism which so many, in all ages and countries, have made a cloak for self-interest."

Here Mr. Croker discovered a matter which added a piquant flavour to this saying: "This remarkable *sortie*, which has very much amused the world, will hereafter be still more amusing, when it is known that it appears, by the books of the Club, that at the moment it was uttered, *Mr. Fox was in the chair*."

We can imagine the roar as all faces turned to the good-humoured chairman. But, unfortunately, fifteen years later, Mr. Croker withdraws the statement: "So it appeared on Mr. Hatchett's statement, but a more accurate consideration of the mode in which the records of the club were kept now leads

me to think that Mr. Fox, though appointed president for the evening, was not present, and that his place was filled by Gibbon. I am sorry to be obliged to throw doubt on so pleasant an anecdote."

"*Qu'une porte soit fermée,*" &c. The incident is either true, or false, or doubtful; if so highly doubtful, it has no value. But could it be doubtful when we have Mr. Croker's discovering not only that Fox was *not* in the chair, but that it was occupied by Gibbon. Our annotator so clings to what he has once broached, that this "leads me to believe," is but a reluctant form of entire withdrawal.

Johnson, speaking of the way judges should occupy themselves out of court, declared that: "it is very proper a judge should employ what time he has to himself to his own advantage, in the most profitable manner. . . . Every judge who has land trades to a certain extent in corn or in cattle, and in the land itself; undoubtedly his steward acts for him, and so do clerks for a great merchant."

On which Croker says: "Yet see *ante*, p. 229, how he censured a judge because he wore a round hat in the country, and farmed his own demesne."

On "seeing *ante*, p. 229," we find that Johnson "said he did not approve of a judge's calling himself Farmer Burnett, and going about in a little round hat. He laughed heartily at his lordship's saying he was an enthusiastic farmer. "For," said he,

"what can he do in farming by his enthusiasm?" An utter misapprehension. In the one case, Johnson was vindicating the right of the judge to employ his spare time in farming if he fancied it; in the other, he reprehended the indignity of sinking the judge in the farmer.

"A friend of mine," said Johnson, "came to me, and told me that a lady wished to have Dr. Dodd's picture in a braccelet, and asked me for a motto. I said, I could think of no better than *Currat Lex.*"

On which Croker: "I have been told that the lady was Dr. Dodd's relict; but if this were so, Dr. Johnson could not have been aware of it; for however he might disapprove of the wearing it, he would hardly have afflicted *her* with such a speech."

The lady was not afflicted with the speech at all; it was a joking suggestion of Johnson's to her friend. It is evident that the point of Johnson's rebuke was directed against a strange lady's wishing to carry Dodd's likeness. There could be no objection to the wife carrying her husband's picture. Mr. Croker sees this serious objection, and at once engenders a new theory to support the first, which itself had no support. It was concealed from Johnson that it was Mrs. Dodd!

Speaking of Lord Charles Hay, who was tried by court-martial, Johnson said: "I wrote something for

Lord Charles, and I thought he had nothing to fear from a court-martial."

"I have looked over," says Croker, "the original minutes of this court-martial, and can find nothing that can be supposed to have been written by Johnson. He meant, *perhaps*, some defence in the press." Not "perhaps," but to a certainty. Who, but Mr. Croker, could so interpret, "I wrote something for" an officer.

Dr. Taylor once sent to ask Johnson to dine, adding that "he had got a hare;" Johnson replied, "Tell him I'll dine, hare or rabbit." Says Mr. Croker, "We smile in these luxurious days at a Prebendary's considering a hare as such a tempting delicacy."

No one would be inclined to smile, and there was nothing about "tempting" or "delicacy;" no more than if Taylor had said, "come and take share of a round of beef to-day." "There was also," says Boswell in the "Hebrides:" "what I cannot help disliking at breakfast, cheese; it is the custom over all the Highlands to have it; and it often smells very strong, and poisons to a certain degree the elegance of an *Indian* repast."

On which this strange note: "Mr. Boswell forgets that there were breakfasts before the *Indian* luxuries of tea and sugar had been introduced: these were the intruders." Neither Boswell nor any one else assumed

"that there were no breakfasts" before tea and sugar came in. He only objected to the strong-smelling cheese.

"The Reverend Dr. Parr," says Boswell, "in a late tract, appears to suppose that *Dr. Johnson not only endured, but almost solicited, an interview with Dr. Priestley*. In justice to Dr. Johnson, I declare my firm belief that he never did. My illustrious friend was particularly resolute in not giving countenance to men whose writings were considered as pernicious to society." Dr. Parr vindicated his statement, not literally, it seems to me; but sufficiently to negative the implied boast of Boswell that Johnson would not at all tolerate a person of heterodox views. But Mr. Croker takes the casuistical view:—

"Parr endeavoured to support his assertion by evidence, which, however, really contradicted him. For instead of Johnson's having *solicited an interview* (which was the point in dispute), Dr. Parr is obliged to admit that the meeting was at Mr. Paradise's *dinner-table*, that Dr. Johnson did not *solicit the interview*, but was aware that Dr. Priestley was invited, and that he behaved to him with civility; and then Dr. Parr concludes, in a way that does little credit either to his accuracy or his candour, 'Should Mr. Boswell be pleased to maintain that Dr. Johnson rather *consented* to the interview, than *almost solicited it*, I shall not object to the change of expression'—

the *mode of expression* being a disingenuous surrender of the whole question, leaving Dr. Parr without a shadow of excuse for his misrepresentation."

Dr. Johnson was informed that this person was to be at the dinner. By his not absenting himself when he might, he could be said to have "*almost solicited*" (Dr. Parr's expression) the meeting.

In a discussion on opening a friend's eyes to the frailty of his wife, Boswell asked:—

"'Would you tell Mr. ——?' (naming a gentleman who assuredly was not in the least danger of such a miserable disgrace, though married to a fine woman). JOHNSON. 'No, sir; because it would do no good; he is so sluggish, he'd never go to parliament and get through a divorce.'"

On which Mr. Croker, much shocked, remarks:—  
 "I fear it will be but too evident at whose expense Mr. Boswell chose to make so offensive an hypothesis."

The allusion was to Mr. Langton. Only the most morbid affectation could see anything offensive here. Two friends are discussing an abstract question, when one, to give the matter more point, supposes the case of a friend,—the hypothesis being not so much his being in the particular position, but how he would behave in consequence. This happens in every conversation, without being set down as an offensive hypothesis. These glosses on the easy remarks of Boswell and his friends are themselves offensive.

Of Lord Lyttelton's inscription on the tomb of Sir James Macdonald, Johnson said it "should have been in Latin, as every thing intended to be *universal* and permanent should be." The meaning of "universal" being, as indeed he would have said of Latin in the Catholic ritual, that it was addressed to universal readers of all nations and generations. But Croker—

"What a strange perversion of language!—*universal!* Why, if it *had* been in Latin, so far from being *universally* understood, it would have been an utter blank to one (the *better*) half of the creation, and, even of the *men* who might visit it, *ninety-nine* will understand it in English for *one* who could in Latin. . . . A mortal may surely be well satisfied if his fame lasts as long as the language in which he spoke or wrote."

Johnson's point, as usual, quite misapprehended.

An illustration of the curious spirit in which our commentator goes to his work is shown by his remark on Boswell's statement that "he now refreshed himself by an excursion to Oxford." He finds that this was in July, 1759, and adds, "This extract was therefore misplaced by Mr. Boswell." But Boswell was not giving his details in strict monthly chronology.

"I would ascribe to this year," Boswell says in the paragraph before, and "now" is intended in the same sense—*i.e.*, "about this time." Mr. Croker assumes that it means "next."



Speaking of Johnson's morbid melancholy, Boswell said that we judge of the happiness and misery of our life according to the state of our body, and quoting also the remark of a Turkish lady, "*Ma foi, monsieur, notre bonheur dépend de la façon que notre sang circule.*" Mr. Croker gives up the meaning of this plain passage in despair !

"I never yet saw a regular man," writes Johnson, "except Mr. —, whose exactness I know only by his own report." On this Mr. Croker's note runs :—

"The name in the original manuscript is, as Dr. Hall informed me, *Campbell*. The Scotch non-juring Bishop Campbell was probably the person meant. See an account of this gentleman, *post*, Oct. 25, 1773."

But this entry is in Johnson's religious diary, and the words seem to point to one alive. This non-juring Bishop Johnson described as dying in London in 1744, nearly eighty years old. He surely means the Dr. Campbell, who carried on a vast number of literary tasks together, and whom he gave up for fear the Scotch should say he learned all from *Cawmell*.

On a barrister saying, in reference to success at the Bar, that "It was by no means true that a man of good parts and application is sure of having business, though he, indeed, allowed that *if such a man could but appear in a few causes, his merit would be known, and he would get forward* ; but that the great risk was, that a man might pass half a lifetime in the courts,

and never have an opportunity of showing his abilities,"

"Now," says Boswell, commenting on this, "at the distance of fifteen years since this conversation passed, the observation which I have had an opportunity of making in Westminster Hall has convinced me that, however true the opinion of Dr. Johnson's legal friend may have been some time ago, the same certainty of success cannot now be promised to the same display of merit. The reasons, however, of the rapid rise of some, and the disappointment of others equally respectable, are such as it might seem invidious to mention, and would require a longer detail than would be proper for this work." On which Mr. Croker sets him right: "Mr. Boswell's personal feelings here have clouded his perception, for Johnson's friend was so far from holding out a *certainty* of success, that he scarcely admitted a probability."

An utter perversion of Boswell's words. The legal friend *did* speak of "certainty of success." "A man," he said, "would '*get forward*' if he had a few causes." And that Boswell, nicely accurate, had this proviso in his view is shown by his using the words "same *display* of merit"—*i.e.*, having a few causes.

"I mentioned," says Boswell, "that an eminent friend" (Mr. Burke) "of ours, talking of the common remark, that affection descends, said, that 'this was wisely contrived for the preservation of mankind; for

which it was not so necessary that there should be affection from children to parents, as from parents to children."

Now this seems a *philosophic* view, and fair ground for so unequal a dispensation for the general preservation of mankind. No question of morals entered into the discussion. Mr. Croker supplements the view of this proposal with a theory of his own utterly *hors de propos*.

"Wisely *and* mercifully," he says, "*wisely*, to ensure the preservation and education of children ; and *mercifully*, to render less afflictive the loss of parents, which, in the course of nature, children must suffer."

It will be seen that for Mr. Burke's view a good argument is given. Mr. Croker's "merciful" addition is a bit of mere sentiment which, if well founded, would destroy Mr. Burke's argument, as, if it be the *feelings* of children that are to be considered, parents might claim to be put on the same footing.

Talking of expense, Johnson observed with what munificence a great merchant will spend his money, both from having it at command, and from his enlarged views by calculation of the good effect upon the whole. "Whereas," said he, "you will hardly ever find a country gentleman who is not a good deal disconcerted at an unexpected occasion for his being obliged to lay out ten pounds."

On which Croker ;—

"What Johnson says is true in fact, but the main reason is, that the property of a great merchant is more at command, from its convertibility : he draws a check or gives a bill ; but country gentlemen have no means of meeting an unexpected emergency, but a mortgage, or perhaps a fall of timber—both slow and cumbrous expedients."

The delicacy of Johnson's observation is all spoiled by this sort of rough analysis. If Johnson be speaking of pure munificence or liberality, he supposes both to be well off ; for the squire can draw his cheque or bill as well as the merchant. But the point is the tone of character in both—the merchant being always ready with his money, the squire hesitating. The idea of mortgage and felling timber in connection with "ten pounds" is futile.

Donaldson, the Scotch bookseller, who printed and sold in London, as the law entitled him to do, cheap copies of works long out of copyright, and which the English "trade" kept in their hands, is not unreasonably praised by Boswell for his "spirited exertions," while he more particularly referred to his bringing the matter before the House of Lords. Mr. Croker, however, as usual perverting, says:—

"It savours of that nationality which Mr. Boswell was so anxious to disclaim, to talk thus eulogistically of 'the very spirited exertions' of a piratical bookseller."

It will be seen there was no piracy save in the opinion of the monopolists: for the law was with him.

“Johnson said once to me, ‘Sir, I honour Derrick for his presence of mind. One night, when Floyd, another poor author, was wandering about the streets in the night, he found Derrick fast asleep upon a bulk: upon being suddenly waked, Derrick started up, ‘My dear Floyd, I am sorry to see you in this destitute state: will you go home with me to *my lodgings*?’”

“No great presence of mind; for Floyd would have naturally accepted such a proposal, and then Derrick would have been doubly exposed.”—CROKER.

Here, again, is the lack of appreciation of a joke. Mr. Croker does not see that Johnson is speaking of the presence of mind that could supply so apt an answer. He trusted to chance for the rest. Then there was the sudden surprise from the readiness of the turn given, which would have the effect of taking back the disturber.

Dr. Johnson on one occasion mentioned an Italian of some note in London who said to him, “We have in our service a prayer called the *Pater Noster*, which is a very fine composition. I wonder who is the author of it.” A singular instance of ignorance in a man of some literature and general inquiry.

“Mr. Macpherson,” says Mr. Croker, “thought that this was Barette—but of the two I should have

rather suspected Martinelli ; but it is hardly credible of any one."

Croker is wrong. Malone may have related the story to Johnson. Baretto tried to explain it away, as Malone told Sir Joshua, who replied, "This turn which B. now gives the matter was an afterthought, for he once said to me myself, 'There are various opinions about the writer of that prayer; some give it to St. Augustine, some to St. Chrysostom, &c. What is your opinion?'"

Mr. Croker speculates a good deal about "who was intended" in such allusions as "our eminent friend," "a certain player," "a well-known statesman," and the like. Some of his guesses are good, but others are far-fetched, and can be proved to be wrong. The player whose conversation fed you with a renovation of hope to end in a constant succession of disappointment, was not Sheridan, as he thinks, but Macklin, as mentioned by Mr. John Taylor. "I remember a lady of quality in this town, Lady ———, who was a wonderful mimic, and used to make me laugh immoderately. I have heard she is now gone mad." Mrs. Piozzi supplies the name—Lady Emily Harvey.

§ *Mystery as to the Age of Miss Burney and of other Ladies.*

Mr. Croker's morbid taste for hunting out the secret of ladies' ages was not a very worthy or

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manly one; and, though it scarcely merited the vituperation of Macaulay, was but further evidence of this unhappy temper. The little fictions by which ladies strive to hide the advances of time are regarded with good-natured indulgence; and wherever a grim critic makes some discovery of a date inconsistent with feminine assertion, he either passes it by with a smile, or, if it affect the matter in hand, simply records it by way of useful correction. But over such discoveries Mr. Croker seems to gloat as over the detection of some conspiracy to defraud. He calls aloud to all the world, and bids it note how he had found out the creature in an attempt to pass off a false age upon the town. Where he suspected such imposition, he would take immense pains to discover the truth, hunting up dates, searching registers, &c. As usual, this eagerness to unveil imaginary fraud led him into pitfalls or "mare's-nests," so often the fate of those whose eyes are blinded by prejudices. One of these is the grand question of Miss Burney's age. This lady, the "pet" of Dr. Johnson, and the friend of so many "Johnsonians," would have been a valuable auxiliary for the Editor of Boswell's work. She had declined, however, to assist Mr. Boswell himself, and had also given Mr. Croker a similar refusal. Hence, according to Lord Macaulay, arose the fury of our critic, though this one would be inclined to doubt;

for Mr. Croker's delight in a damaging discovery was such that he would not scruple, and, indeed, could not help, sacrificing a friend in such a case.

One of the favourite and most pleasing literary traditions is connected with the production of "Evelina." The interesting feature was the private and unobtrusive mode of its composition and entrance into the world; and the fact of a work containing such strongly-marked characters being written by a girl, or, at least, a *young* person.

In his distempered view, the whole was as great a myth as the sinking of the "Vengeur." Miss Burney had made herself out to be a young girl instead of a woman when the work was written, and the work itself, whether written by girl or woman, was but a poor thing after all. Her father, too, and, indeed, all who knew anything of the matter, seem to have entered heartily into this strange confederacy, viz., to represent her some eight or ten years younger than she really was, and therefore a prodigy. Now to hear Mr. Croker:—

"We must now revert to the suspicion which we have before expressed, that a little literary vanity has occasioned the remarkable suppression of dates in the earlier portion of these Memoirs; and this leads us to the extraordinary and interesting account of Madame d'Arblay's first appearance in the literary world. At the age of *seventeen*, as we have always



seen and heard it stated, Miss Fanny Burney—without the knowledge of her father—without any suspicion on the part of her family and friends that she had any literary turn or capacity whatsoever—published anonymously her celebrated novel of ‘Evelina, or a Young Lady’s Entrance into the World.’

“‘Her first work, “Evelina,”’ says her father, Dr. Burney, ‘was written by stealth, in a closet up two pair of stairs, that was appropriated to the *younger children as a play-room*. No one was let into the secret but my third daughter, afterwards Mrs. Phillips; though even to her it was never read till printed, from want of private opportunity. \* \* \* The book had been six months published before I even heard its name; which I learnt at last without her knowledge. But great, indeed, was then my surprise, to find that it was then in general reading, and commended in no common manner in the several Reviews of the times. Of this she was unacquainted herself, as she was then ill, and in the country. When I knew its title, I commissioned one of her sisters to procure it for me privately. I opened the first volume with fear and trembling; not having the least idea that, without the use of the press, or any practical knowledge of the world, she could write a book worth reading. The dedication to myself, however, brought tears into my eyes; and

before I had read half the first volume I was much surprised, and, I confess, delighted.'

"Madame d'Arblay's account, which is very prolix and desultory, agrees with that of her father, but gives a few additional particulars—one of the first of which the reader would naturally expect to be the *age* of the writer: *that*, however, is not distinctly told; but the slight allusions which are made to the subject would seem to confirm the idea of the *extreme youth* of the author. She relates that at *eight* years she did not know her letters, though at *ten* she began scribbling, almost incessantly but always secretly, little works of invention; and that when she *attained* her *fifteenth* year (that is, we presume, when she had accomplished her *fourteenth*), she took an opportunity, while her parents were absent, of burning her heap of manuscripts. 'The last of the little works immolated was the history of Caroline Evelyn, the mother of "Evelina"; which, however, left on the mind of the writer so animated an impression, that inevitably and almost unconsciously, the *whole* of "A Young Lady's Entrance into the World" was pent up in the inventor's memory ere a paragraph was committed to paper.' At length, however, but slowly, two volumes were copied out. Hitherto she had no confidant but her sisters; but when the manuscript was in a state to be offered to a publisher, she was obliged to employ her brother for that purpose.

“ ‘ Her younger brother, afterwards the celebrated Greek scholar, gaily and without reading a word of the work, accepted a share in so *whimsical a frolic*, and joyously undertook to be her agent to the bookseller with her manuscript.’ ‘ The *young agent* was now muffled up by the *laughing committee*’ (herself and her sisters) ‘ in an old great-coat and a large old hat, to give a somewhat antique as well as a vulgar disguise, and was sent forth in the dusk of the evening with the first two volumes to Fleet Street, where he left them to their fate.’ Some months elapsed before it came to the notice of her father, and then it broke upon him, accompanied with such a burst of general approbation from the fashionable and the learned.

“ The good Doctor tells us that he was ‘ surprised and delighted ;’ and delighted and surprised he well might be, for even after his evidence and the more minute account given by Madame d’Arblay herself, we are utterly at a loss to comprehend how a girl of *seventeen*, slow, shy, secluded—almost neglected—never having been, as it would seem, from under the parental roof, and having seen little or nothing of life (but her own little play-room), could have written such a work as ‘ *Evelina*.’ We are not blind to its faults—the plot is puerile enough—the dénouement incredible—the latter part very tedious—there is much exaggeration in some of the minor characters,

while that of the heroine herself is left almost a blank—but the elegance and grace of the style, the vivacity of many of the descriptions, the natural though rather too broad humour, the combination of the minor circumstances, the artist-like contrast of the several characters, and, above all, the accurate and distinctive knowledge of life and manners of different classes of society—from what sources did this *child, writing by stealth, in the playroom*, derive them? If she had lived a few years in the world there would have been not much to marvel at—at *five and twenty*, 'Evelina,' though a clever work even for a writer of that age, would not have been such a wonder as the world has been accustomed to consider it.

"It was, therefore, not without surprise, that, in the long and circumstantial account given by Madame d'Arblay of the composition of 'Evelina,' we observed that no allusion was made to what we had always considered the most extraordinary ingredient in the story—the *author's age*. This induced us to look into the matter a little more closely, when we were additionally surprised to find that every little incident which could have led to any exact calculation of the interval between 'burning the manuscripts when the author had attained her fifteenth year,' and the publication of 'Evelina' in 1778, and, in short, every clue to the date of Madame d'Arblay's birth, has been most *curiously* obliterated. To a cursory

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reader, the interval between 'Caroline Evelyn' and 'Evelina,' would appear certainly not to exceed two or three years; and the mention of the 'disguise of the *young messenger* by the *laughing committee*' would confirm the idea of a boyish and girlish frolic. After turning the volumes *over again and again*, and wasting a good deal of time in pursuit of evidence on this point, we were about to give up the hopes of any new discovery and to acquiesce in the received opinion, when we discovered a casual hint that she was born at Lynn; and, as her father left that town in 1760, it was clear that she was *somewhat* older than had hitherto been supposed. *This induced an inquiry at Lynn*, and we have found, in the registry of St. Margaret's parish there, that 'Frances, the daughter of Charles and Esther Burney, was baptized in July, 1752;' so that she was *past twenty-five* when 'Evelina' was published: and also that her '*disguised young messenger*' (born in 1757) was not only twenty years of age, but had, we believe, already graduated at the University."

Such is the Reviewer's case. Without entering into a formal discussion, it may be said that it is his morbid imagination that seems to have engendered the foundation of the whole; for neither Dr. Burney nor his daughter states she was "seventeen," or "in the children's play-room" as a child when she wrote the book. Indeed, it must seem impossible

to pass off a woman of twenty-five as a young girl of seventeen; and the sole ground seems to have been Mr. Croker's "having always seen and heard it stated" that she was seventeen. Dr. Burney, too, is merely giving a father's fond recollections of her early literary taste when a child. The strange thing is that this doubt should have occurred to only Mr. Croker, and not to the innumerable friends and *literati* to whom it must have appeared, that this full-grown woman of five or six-and-twenty did not look like "blushing sixteen" or seventeen. Whatever be the truth (and Lord Macaulay declares that there was an elder sister of the same name, just as Sterne had two daughters called "Lydia"), we may be certain that Mr. Croker's theory of the lady's wholesale suppression of dates through the work being of set purpose, artfully carried out to hide her age, is one of his own imaginings, developed by brooding into a theory.

Another characteristic specimen he himself furnishes, in reference to poor old Lady Cork—his friend—and who had asked him to dine in 1835. Here is the truly characteristic return, in a note:

"The Hon. Mary Monkton, born April, 1746. Lodge's Irish Peerage dates her birth 1737, but this is a mistake for an elder sister of the same name. Now in her *eighty-ninth* year, Lady Cork still entertains and enjoys society with extraordinary

health, spirits, and vivacity, and Boswell's description of her *fifty-four years ago*, as the 'lively Miss Monkton, who used always to have the finest *bit of blue* at her parties,' is characteristic to this day.—CROKER, 1835."

"In July, 1836, in allusion to the mistake in the Irish peerage, she wrote me the following lively note:—

"NEW BURLINGTON STREET, July 22. [1836.]

"I would rather I was a *hundred*—because you and many other agreeable people would come to me as a wonder. The fact is, I am only verging on *ninety*. I wish the business of the nation may not prevent your giving me the pleasure of your company to dinner on Wednesday, the 3d, at a quarter before eight. It is in vain, I suppose, to expect you at my tea-drinking on Friday, the 5th, or in the evening of the 3d, in the event of your not being able to dine with me on that day.

"M. CORK AND ORRERY."

"I have suppressed a word or two of compliment, which—with the forgetting that I was both out of office and parliament, and had therefore no share in 'the business of the nation'—are the only marks of anility in this note written on the verge of 91;—*for I found by the register of St. James's parish that she had understated her age by one year.* She died on the 30th of May, 1840.—CROKER, 1847."

Let us fancy this strange being rushing to the parish Registers to detect the unfortunate ladies who had been so incautious as to allude to their age. It was certainly a triumph in Lady Cork's instance to discover "that she had understated her age by one year."

The same fascination drew him into investigating Mrs. Thrale's age, but as we have seen, this only led to embarrassment; and indeed to one of those discreditable "rounds" with Macaulay, when he was brought to the ground.

Having now disposed of Mr. Croker's treatment of Boswell, and shown reasonable cause for doubting the statement in the "Quarterly Review," that "Croker's 'Boswell' is one of the best edited books in the language," I will now pass to the second portion of the subject—some interesting inquiries into Boswell's mode of composition, collection of materials, and other matters connected with his great work.





PART THE SECOND.



BOSWELL.



# BOSWELL.

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## CHAPTER I.

### BOSWELL AT HIS WORK.

WE now approach an interesting portion of our inquiries. First: what was the method adopted by Boswell in his wonderful system of reporting, and, secondly, how did he arrange and manipulate his notes? He himself explains to us (April, 1778) that "though I did not write what is called stenography, or short hand, in appropriate characters devised for the purpose, I had a method of my own of writing half words and leaving out some altogether, so as yet to keep the substance and language of any discourse which I had heard so much in view, that I could give it very completely soon after I had taken it down. He defied me, as he had once defied an actual short-hand writer; and he made the experiment by reading slowly and distinctly a part of Robertson's 'History of America,' while I endeavoured to write it in my way of taking notes. It was found that I

had it very imperfectly; the conclusion \* from which was, that its excellence was principally owing to a studied arrangement of words, which could not be varied or abridged without an essential injury." The point of Boswell's remark is missed by Mr. Croker, which was that he failed in the case of "a *studied* arrangement of words" *i.e.*, of a composition.

Now to see him at his task. He must have always had his note-book in his pocket, and have used it in this fashion; and it may be imagined that from practice he could contrive to set down the few "catch words" that might be necessary without interrupting the conversation. At Streatham, however, and at houses where he was well known, he did not scruple to *report* regularly, and it would almost seem that he took so little share in what was going on, or was so privileged that his proceedings caused as little *gêne* as a professional stenographer would to a practised speaker. Mrs. Piozzi, however, when she found how she had suffered from his proceedings, inveighed severely against it:

"This I thought a thing so very particular, that I begged his (Johnson's) leave to write it down, before anything could intervene that might make me forget

\* "This is odd reasoning," comments Mr. Croker. "Most readers would have come to the more obvious conclusion, that Boswell had failed in his experiment at short-hand. This passage may account for some verbal errors and obscurities in this work; when copying his notes, after a considerable lapse of time, Mr. Boswell probably misunderstood his own abbreviations."

the force of the expressions: a trick, which I have however seen played on common occasions, of sitting steadily down at the other end of the room to write at the moment what should be said in company, either *by* Dr. Johnson or *to* him, I never practised myself, nor approved of in another. There is something so ill-bred, and so inclining to treachery in this conduct, that were it commonly adopted, all confidence would soon be exiled from society, and a conversation assembly-room would become tremendous as a court of justice." But another witness gives a truly ridiculous portrait of the faithful reporter at his work:—

"As Mr. Boswell was at Streatham only upon a morning visit, a collation was ordered, to which all were assembled. Mr. Boswell was preparing to take a seat that he seemed, by prescription, to consider as his own, next to Dr. Johnson; but Mr. Seward, who was present, waved his hand for Mr. Boswell to move further on, saying, with a smile, 'Mr. Boswell, that seat is Miss Burney's.'

"He stared, amazed: . . . . . but, after looking round for a minute or two, with an important air of demanding the meaning of this innovation, and receiving no satisfaction, he reluctantly, almost resentfully, got another chair, and placed it at the back of the shoulder of Dr. Johnson, while this new and unheard of rival quietly seated herself as if not hearing what was passing; for she shrunk from the explana-

tion that she feared might ensue, as she saw a smile stealing over every countenance, that of Dr. Johnson himself not excepted, at the discomfiture and surprise of Mr. Boswell.

“ Mr. Boswell, however, was so situated as not to remark it in the Doctor ; and of every one else, when in that presence, he was unobservant, if not contemptuous. In truth, when he met with Dr. Johnson, he commonly forbore even answering anything that was said, or attending to anything that went forward, lest he should miss the smallest sound from that voice to which he paid such exclusive, though merited homage. But the moment that voice burst forth, the attention which it excited in Mr. Boswell amounted almost to pain. His eyes goggled with eagerness ; he leant his ear almost on the shoulder of the Doctor ; and his mouth dropt open to catch every syllable that might be uttered ; nay, he seemed not only to dread losing a word, but to be anxious not to miss a breathing ; as if hoping from it, latently, or mystically, some information.

“ But when, in a few minutes, Dr. Johnson, whose eye did not follow him, and who had concluded him to be at the other end of the table, said something gaily and good-humouredly, by the appellation of Bozzy ; and discovered, by the sound of the reply, that Bozzy had planted himself, as closely as he could, behind and between the elbows of the new

usurper and his own, the Doctor turned angrily round upon him, and, clapping his hand rather loudly upon his knee, said, in a tone of displeasure, 'What do you do there; Sir?—Go to the table, Sir!'

"Mr. Boswell instantly, and with an air of affright, obeyed: and there was something so unusual in such humble submission to so imperious a command, that another smile gleamed its way across every mouth, except that of the Doctor and of Mr. Boswell; who now, very unwillingly, took a distant seat.

"But, ever restless when not at the side of Dr. Johnson, he presently recollected something that he wished to exhibit, and, hastily rising, was running away in its search: when the Doctor, calling after him, authoritatively said: 'What are you thinking of, Sir? Why do you get up before the cloth is removed?—Come back to your place, Sir!'"—*Memoirs of Dr. Burney*, ii. 193.

One of his note-books came into Lord Houghton's possession, who states that it contains "several sheets filled with anecdotes and observations of the most various character, written without order, and generally without dates. At the end are inserted many scraps of paper and backs of letters, on which Boswell has jotted down memoranda of stories and reflections." \*

Dr. Hill, who has offered on this rather perplexing

\* A selection was published in the miscellanies of the Philobiblon Society, edited by Lord Houghton. The whole was later printed at the end of Dr. Rogers' "Life of Boswell," issued by the Grampian Club.



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subject some acute speculation, seems to suppose that these rough notes were the basis of his regular diary. But it will be found that this was a collection of stories, &c., made for a special purpose, and having nothing to do with the "Life." Dr. Hill says, "I cannot pretend to offer any thoroughly satisfactory explanation of the fact that Boswell kept double records—if indeed he did keep double records—of the same."

What Dr. Hill throws out later, that Boswell may have been making a general collection of good things, proves to have been actually the case, as Boswell tells us he was so engaged, and consulted his great friend on the publication. This he likened to one, which he heard that Horace Walpole had made. What was entered in it was merely the "good things" and smart speeches of Dr. Johnson—not reported dialogues. But I fancy there was no system of double records, Boswell's diary containing the conversations, and these loose sheets the "bons mots." As Dr. Hill has clearly explained,\* when Boswell gathered his recollections for Langton, the latter did not produce any notes but simply related his anecdotes:

"I found," says his friend, "in conversation with him, that a good store of Johnsoniana was treasured in his mind. The authenticity of every article is unquestionable. For the expressions, I, who wrote them down in his presence, am partly answerable.

\* "Dr. Johnson, his Friends, &c.," p. 191.

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“It is quite clear from this that Boswell had, to use his own word, ‘Johnsonised’ the stories with which Mr. Langton supplied him. His friend gave him the substance of what Johnson had said, and Boswell then gave it a Johnsonian turn. So Johnson himself in his early life had given an oratorical turn to the notes of the Parliamentary debates that had been taken down for him by Guthrie. Johnson no doubt, even at his first start, made a far greater change than ever Boswell did, for he could have supplied, and in fact generally did supply, the greatest speakers, not only with words, but also with facts and arguments.”

In fact there is in existence one of the little books which Boswell used in his records, and which is distinct from the one described by Lord Houghton.

In Mr. Pocock’s catalogue we find:—“A notebook in which Boswell jotted down from day to day the actual sayings and doings of the eminent Lexicographer. This volume, showing the care exercised by Boswell, and as relating to the very beginning of this celebrated biography, contains literary opinions and aphorisms peculiar to this great man, and of which many have never been published. He gives a specific account of the manner in which he compiled the Dictionary, and relates other matters of interest bearing on his long literary career and contemporaries.”

This will aid in clearing up the matter. But I can illustrate this matter in a still more curious way.

All readers will recall Johnson's powerful letter to Macpherson which begins :—

“MR. JAMES MACPHERSON,—I received your foolish and impudent letter. Any violence offered me I shall do my best to repel; and what I cannot do for myself, the law shall do for me. I hope I never shall be deterred from detecting what I think a cheat, by the menaces of a ruffian.”

Now this was written down by Boswell at Johnson's dictation; but imperfect evidence of the original letter in a court of law, for Johnson may not have recalled the exact words. Indeed, he endorsed it, “This, *I think*, is a true copy.” One cannot be certain that Boswell may not have “touched up” what was thus dictated. For at this time his curious system of reporting was in full working order:

“In progress of time, when my mind was, as it were, *strongly impregnated with the Johnsonian æther*, I could with much more facility and exactness, carry in my memory, and commit to paper the exuberant variety of his wisdom and wit.”

From the endorsement alluded to we may assume this was not exercised on this occasion. However this may be, that industrious collector Mr. Pocock actually came into possession, not of Boswell's copy, but of the *original* letter itself.

“MR. JAMES MACPHERSON,—I received your foolish and impudent *note*. *Whatever insult* is offered me, I

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will do my best to repel, and what I cannot do for myself, the law will do for me. *I will not desist from detecting what I think a cheat from any fear of the menaces of a ruffian.*" The words in italics are the variations: the date is January 20, 1775.

But how is the different shape of the same story in the printed version and in the notes to be accounted for? It is clear that Boswell took the stories directly from this collection, and the "collection" being for the most part written in the early part of the acquaintance with Johnson, an interval of many years elapsed before their being used in the "Life." Did Boswell then "work them up," as it is called, when he addressed himself to the task of writing the "Life," or did he take them directly from his notes. This latter course he could hardly have followed. As we understand the account, what Boswell took down in his peculiar "short-hand" was the substance of a sentence, its meaning, the forcible words used; when he came to compose, aided by his wonderful memory, there were found repetitions, the same idea or same argument being expressed in different words. Here was shown Boswell's admirable power of selecting the essence, not merely of the argument, but even of the expression, and he knew how to add strength by discarding what seemed *de trop*. This, itself, would be evident, even from the text itself, which never could have represented the talk as it

came from Johnson's lips. The whole is too deliberate, too close, and too well winnowed, as it were. It may be assumed as certain that Boswell compressed, threw out, made different sentences into one, all to the improvement of his narrative. A few specimens will show, in a sufficiently convincing manner, I think, the nature of the process adopted by Boswell, consisting of two distinct modes of treatment; viz., 1st, compressing, combining, and giving the essence; and 2nd, "touching up," and substituting, and making more forcible, but keeping *within* the form used by his friend.

"Mr. Sheridan, though a man of knowledge and parts, was a little fancifull (*sic*) in his projects for establishing oratory and altering the mode of British education. Mr. Samuel Johnson said, "Sherry cannot abide me, for I allways (*sic*) ask him, Pray, Sir, what do you propose to do?" (From Mr. Johnson.)

"The second anecdote is as follows: 'Boswell was talking to Mr. Samuel Johnson of Mr. Sheridan's enthusiasm for the advancement of eloquence. "Sir," said Mr. Johnson, "it won't do. He cannot carry through his scheme. He is like a man attempting to stride the English Channel. Sir, the cause bears no proportion to the effect. It is setting up a candle at Whitechapel to give light at Westminster."' "

"In the Life," says Dr. Hill, "these stories about Mr. Sheridan are not only run into one, but they are also not a little altered. Boswell writes: 'He now added,

“Sheridan cannot bear me. I bring his declamation to a point. I ask him a plain question, What do you mean to teach? Besides, Sir, what influence can Mr. Sheridan have upon the language of this country by his narrow exertions? Sir, it is burning a farthing candle at Dover to show light at Calais.”’

“While the first of the stories seems to me to have been not a little improved, the latter has suffered to a far greater extent. Whitechapel and Westminster not only contrast far better than Dover and Calais, but they are sufficiently near to keep the absurdity from being too gross.

“In the ‘Boswelliana’ we have the following anecdote: ‘Boswell asked Mr. Samuel Johnson what was best to teach a gentleman’s children first. “Why, Sir,” said he, “there is no matter what you teach them first. It matters no more than which leg you put first into your breeches (*sic*). Sir, you may stand disputing which you shall put in first, but in the meantime your legs are bare. No matter which you put in first, so that you put ’em both in, and then you have your breeches on. Sir, while you think which of two things to teach a child first, another boy in the common course has learnt both.” (I was present.)’

“This is thus given in the *Life* in a much more pithy form: ‘We talked of the education of children; and I asked him what he thought was best to teach them first. JOHNSON: “Sir, it is no matter what you teach them first, any more than what leg you shall

put into your breeches first. Sir, you may stand disputing which is best to put in first, but in the meantime your breech is bare. Sir, while you are considering which of two things you should teach your child first, another boy has learnt them both.”’

“If in ‘*Boswelliana*’ we have a report in the rough of what Johnson on this occasion said, Boswell may surely claim some small degree of merit for the more pointed way in which it is given in the *Life*.”

Now here is dropped out the words “It won’t do. He cannot carry through his scheme. He is like a man attempting to stride the English Channel. Sir, the cause bears no proportion to the effect.” It is evident that Boswell did not, when revising, *recal* a more correct version, for the result shows that a process of selection took place. Johnson certainly used the illustration of Westminster and Whitechapel, but the allusion to “the Channel” suggested Calais, and it occurred to Boswell that it might be more forcible to substitute “Calais and Dover” in the candle illustration; and it must be admitted there was no loss of effect. That some process of this sort took place in Boswell’s mind is proved by another illustration.

“Johnson had a sovereign contempt for Wilkes and his party, which he looked upon as a mere rabble. “Sir,” said he, “had Wilkes’ mob prevailed against Government, this nation had died of *phthiriasis*.”

Mr. Langton told me this. The expression *morbus pediculosus*, as being better known, would strike more. *Lousy disease* may be put in a parenthesis."

Here Boswell clearly reveals his method. The obscurer Latin word was not likely to *tell*. The substituted one, and its explanation, he considered, was in the spirit of what Johnson had said, but made more intelligible to the crowd. This will be shown from yet another instance which I have discovered.

"A dull country magistrate gave Johnson a long tedious account of his exercising his criminal jurisdiction, the result of which was his having sentenced four convicts to transportation. Johnson, in an agony of impatience to get rid of such a companion, exclaimed, 'I heartily wish, Sir, I were a fifth.'"

From the "Boswelliana" we learn that the scene was at Windsor, and the hero the mayor, with whom he dined. "But the fellow (said he), not content with feeding my body, thought he must feed my mind too, and so he told me a long story how he had sent *three* criminals to the plantations. Tired to death with his nonsense, 'I wish' (to God), said Johnson, 'that I was the fourth.'"—Mr. SHERIDAN.

Now this anecdote is useful in many ways as illustrative of what has been said. Boswell made the criminals *four*, and Johnson the fifth, to give an idea of greater tediousness to the narrative. But as he had it at second hand, the *ipsissima verba* of John-



son were not reported to him, he felt entitled to tell it in his own way, and the close fashion in which he has presented it, shows artistic power of a high degree. His making it general, his suppression of verbiage, give force and dignity to Johnson's remark. This, too, makes quite clear his mode of dealing with communicated anecdotes such as those of Langton, which, as I have shown, he put into language such as would best express the tone of thought of his friend. "Very few articles of this collection," he says, "were committed to writing by himself (Langton), he not having that habit. The authenticity of each article is unquestionable. For the expressions, I who wrote them down in his presence am partly answerable." See how carefully accurate he is, *partly* answerable; that is, where they seemed to be in Johnson's style, he accepted them, when not, he "edited" them.

Even after the publication of his work he could improve and strengthen a story. Thus: "A foppish physician imagined that Johnson had animadverted on his wearing a fine coat, and mentioned it to him. 'I did not notice you,' was his answer. The physician still insisted. 'Sir,' (said Johnson), 'had you been dipped in Pactolus I should not have noticed you.'" Now the point of Johnson's answer does not come with much comedy effect; and indeed, the supposition that Johnson had "animadverted" on his coat, so far,

seems to show that the physician did not deserve such a retort. This is mended in the second edition, possibly because another version was given to Boswell, or because he recalled the true one himself. "A foppish physician once reminded Johnson of his having been in company with him on a former occasion. 'I do not remember it, sir.' The physician still insisted, adding, that *he that day wore so fine a coat that it must have attracted his notice.* 'Sir,' said Johnson, 'had you, &c.'" How infinitely superior this version!

It is amusing to find that on one occasion, at least, we can call the different reporters into court, and give judgment, of course, for Mr. Boswell. Mrs. Thrale relates that:—"On one occasion, when he had violently provoked Mr. Pepys, in a different, but perhaps, not a less offensive manner, till something much too like a quarrel was grown up between them, the moment he was gone, "Now," says Dr. Johnson, "is Pepys gone home hating me, who love him better than I did before: he spoke in defence of his dead friend; but though I hope *I* spoke better who spoke against him, yet all my eloquence will gain me nothing but an honest man for my enemy!"

This must be the scene described by Boswell:—"I know nobody who blasts by praise as you do. Now there is Pepys: you praised that man with such disproportion, that I was incited to lessen him, perhaps more than he deserves. His blood is upon

your head. By the same principle, your malice defeats itself; for your censure is too violent."

In her marginal notes on this passage, Mrs. Thrale protests that Johnson would never have used the words "his blood be on your head." Though it may be that this was some of Mr. Boswell's *Johnsonising*.

I will proceed to "furnish forth" a number of these stories in their original shape—supplying only a few specimens of the subsequent alterations—as all would take up too much space. The reader will himself recal them in Boswell's work.

"A keen Scott (*sic*) was standing up for his country, and boasting that it had a great many noble wild prospects. 'Sir,' said Mr. Samuel Johnson, 'I believe you have a great many noble wild prospects. Norway, too, has got some prospects; and Lapland is remarkable for prodigious noble wild prospects. But, sir, I believe the noblest prospect that a Scotchman ever sees is the road which leads him to England.' I was present." (Note-book.)

The printed version:—"Mr. Ogilvie was unlucky enough to choose for the topic of his conversation the praises of his native country. He began with saying, that there was very rich land around Edinburgh. Goldsmith, who had studied physic there, contradicted this, very untruly, with a sneering laugh. Disconcerted a little by this, Mr. Ogilvie then took new ground, where, I suppose, he thought himself per-

fectly safe; for he observed, that Scotland had a great many noble wild prospects. JOHNSON: 'I believe, sir, you have a great many. Norway, too, has noble wild prospects; and Lapland is remarkable for prodigious noble wild prospects. But, sir, let me tell you, the noblest prospect which a Scotchman ever sees, is the high road that leads him to England!' This unexpected and pointed sally produced a roar of applause."

Boswell's comment, by the way, "this unexpected, &c." how dramatically and vividly it brings the scene before us!

"Mr. Samuel Johnson doubted much of the authenticity of the poems of Ossian. Doctor Blair asked him if he thought any man could describe these barbarous manners so well if he had not lived at the time and seen them. 'Any man, sir,' replied Mr. Johnson,—'any man, woman, or child might have done it.'—DOCTOR BLAIR."

"Mr. Samuel Johnson, after being acquainted with Lord Chesterfield, said: 'I see now what this man is. I thought he had been a lord among wits, but I find he is only a wit among lords.'—DOCTOR ROBERTSON."

It is remarkable, by the way, that Mr. Boswell had been reporting some of these speeches in social meetings, and did not suppress a good thing of the kind, because directed against himself. For, in a selection of "Johnsoniana" in the "European Maga-

zine," published before the appearance of the "Life," we find Johnson's retort on Boswell as to his "coming from Scotland," and which the Editor says had been communicated to him by Mr. Boswell, as if for publication!

"Mr. Samuel Johnson said that all sceptical innovators were vain men; and finding mankind already (*sic*) in possession of Truth, they found they could not gratify their vanity in supporting her, and so they have taken to error. Truth (said he) is a cow which will yield such people no more milk, and so they are gone to milk the bull." (I was present.)

In the "Life":—"I mentioned that Sir James had said to me, that he had never seen Mr. Johnson, but he had a great respect for him, though at the same time it was mixed with some degree of terror. JOHNSON: 'Sir, if he were to be acquainted with me, it might lessen both.'"

"Boswell told Mr. Samuel Johnson that Sir James Macdonald said he had never seen him, but he had a great respect for him, though at the same time a great terror. 'Were he to see me,' said Johnson, 'it would probably lessen both.'" (Note-book.)

"Boswell was saying that Derrick was a miserable writer. 'True,' said Mr. Samuel Johnson, 'but it is to his being a writer that he owes anything he has. Sir, had not Derrick been a writer, he would have been sweeping the crosses in the streets, and

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asking halfpence from everybody that passed." (Note-book.)

In the "Life":—"But you are to consider that his being a literary man has got for him all that he has. It has made him King of Bath. Sir, he has nothing to say for himself but that he is a writer. Had he not been a writer, he must have been sweeping the crossings in the streets, and asking halfpence from everybody that passed."

"Boswell told Mr. Samuel Johnson that a gentleman of their acquaintance maintained in public company that he could see no distinction between virtue and vice. 'Sir,' said Mr. Johnson, 'does he intend that we should believe that he is lying, or that he is in earnest? If we think him a liar, that is not honouring him very much. But if we think him in earnest, when he leaves our houses let us count our spoons.'" (Note-book.)

"A dull German baron had got amongst the English at Geneva, and, being highly pleased with their spirit, wanted to imitate them. One day an Englishman came into the baron's room, and found him jumping with all his might upon the chairs and down again, so that he was all in a sweat. 'Mon Dieu! Monsieur le baron,' dit-il, 'que faites-vous?' ('Good God! baron, said he, 'what are you about?') 'Monsieur,' replied the baron, wiping down his temples with a handkerchief, 'j'apprens d'être vif' (I am learning to be

lively’).”—*MADemoiselle de Zoilen*. (No doubt the “Zelide” of the Letters to Temple, so Mr. Boswell gathered his anecdotes from the most doubtful characters.) (Note-book.)

“When Wilkes was borne on the shoulders of the unruly mob, Burke applied to him what Horace says of Pindar,—‘Fertur numeris legibus solutus.’”—*MR. WILKES*, London, April, 1778.

“N.B.—*Dr. Johnson* thought this an admirable double pun; and he will seldom allow any merit to that species of witticism.”

“*Mr. Beauclerk* told *Dr. Johnson* that *Dr. James* said to him he knew more Greek than *Mr. Walmsley*. ‘Sir,’ said he, ‘*Dr. James* did not know enough of Greek to be sensible of his ignorance of the language. *Walmsley* did.’”—*MR. LANGTON*.

“*Dr. Johnson* desired me to tell *Sheridan* he’d be glad to see him and shake hands with him. I said *Sheridan* was unwilling to come, as he never could forget the attack — had told him. ‘But it was wrong to keep up resentment so long,’ said the Doctor; ‘the truth is, he knows I despise his character; ’tis not all resentment; partly out of habit, and rather disgust, as at a drug that has made him sick.’” (Note-book.)

In the “Life:”—“On Saturday, May 17, I saw him for a short time. Having mentioned that I had that morning been with old *Mr. Sheridan*, he remembered

their former intimacy with a cordial warmth, and said to me, 'Tell Mr. Sheridan, I shall be glad to see him and shake hands with him.' BOSWELL: 'It is to me very wonderful that resentment should be kept up so long.' JOHNSON: 'Why, Sir, it is not altogether resentment that he does not visit me; it is partly falling out of the habit,—partly disgust, such as one has at a drug that has made him sick. Besides, I used to laugh at his oratory.' "

Here it is evident that Boswell has thought to improve the story by allotting to himself a portion of Johnson's remarks, "It was wrong," &c.

Mr. Samuel Johnson said of Sheridan: "Sherry is dull, naturally dull; but it must have cost him a great deal of pains to become so exceedingly stupid: such an excess of stupidity is not in nature."—MR. DEMPSTER, from FOOTE.

In the "Life":—"He laughed heartily when I mentioned to him a saying of his concerning Mr. Thomas Sheridan, which Foote took a wicked pleasure to circulate. 'Why, Sir, Sherry is dull, naturally dull; but it must have taken him a great deal of pains to become what we now see him. Such an excess of stupidity is not in nature.' 'So,' said he, 'I allowed him all his own merit.'" "When Derrick was made King of Bath, Mr. Samuel Johnson said, 'Derry may do very well while he can outrun his character, but the moment that his character gets up with him, he



is gone.'” (I was present.) ¶In the “Life” :—  
 “Derrick may do very well, as long as he can outrun his character : but the moment his character gets up with him, it is all over.”

“A certain young clergyman used to come about Dr. Johnson. The Doctor said it vexed him to be in his company, his ignorance was so hopeless. ‘Sir,’ said Mr. Langton, ‘his coming about you shows he wishes to help his ignorance.’ ‘Sir,’ said the Doctor, ‘his ignorance is so great, I am afraid to show him the bottom of it.’”—MR. LANGTON.

Boswell at times, when he has been negligent with his diary, presents a sort of miscellany or collections of “odds and ends” of his great friend’s remarks, which he introduces with some such phrase as “I shall here insert some particulars which I collected at various times.” It is curious that many of these were printed before the “Life” was published, notably in Kearsley’s little volume, which our author praises. It is remarkable that in this latter collection there are some twenty stories which Boswell used. Such as the sayings of Lord Bolingbroke not having courage to “let off” his work during his lifetime; of the precedence between a louse and flea; of Macklin’s conversation being a “renovation of hope”; his proposal to Mrs. Macaulay on equality; the likening Scotch learning to a ship’s crew on short allowance; Lord Chesterfield being a wit among

lords, &c.; of Ossian being capable of being written by many men, many women, &c.; Sheridan being "dull," naturally dull; the retort on the fine prospects in Scotland; the king's compliment, "If you had not written so well"; "Who drives fat oxen"; his speech to the lady who was flattering him, "Consider what it is worth"; the epigrammatic criticism on Lord Chesterfield's letters; his reason for not giving a list of subscriptions.

The likening a *congé d'élire* to throwing a person out of a window and recommending him to fall soft; of declaring that fame was a shuttlecock to be kept up by abuse as well as praise; of his reply to the gentleman who did not think himself *honoured* by his conversation; his ridicule of simple ballads at Miss Reynolds's, "As with my hat upon my head;" and finally on his death bed, his declaration of an attendant's activity being that of a turnspit, &c. All these Mr. Boswell adapted from their often unmeaning shape in Mr. Kearsley's little book, and gave them their present point and effect.

To Mr. Malone, a practised critic, and *littérateur* well *répandu*, his obligations were very great. From Malone's notes he sometimes copied *verbatim*. Malone's judgment directed the whole arrangement of his book, and, we may be certain, secured the omission of much indiscreet matter. In fact as the book stands at present it is difficult to say what

additions may not have been made by him, for Mr. Boswell died when the third edition was being got ready, which was then directed by Malone. There is, indeed, to be noticed all through the work traces of another style or control, especially in the more historical portions where the judicial or critical faculty was requisite. This was probably owing to Malone, whose share in the work is larger than he has received credit for. It may be worth while considering this question a little. It was in Mr. Baldwin's printing office, where he happened to be correcting a proof-sheet of his "Tour," that Boswell made Malone's acquaintance. As the "Life" proceeded this assistance became valuable. "When I have completed the rough draught," he wrote, "by which I mean the work without nice correction, Malone and I are to prepare one half perfectly and then it goes to press." He describes how "the revision of my 'Life of Johnson' by so acute and knowing a critic as Mr. Malone is of most essential consequence, especially as he is *Johnsonianissimus*; and, as he is to hasten to Ireland as soon as his Shakespeare is fairly published, I must avail myself of him *now*. His hospitality and my other invitations, and particularly my attendance at Lord Lonsdale's, have lost us many evenings: but I reckon that a third of the Work is settled, so that I shall get to press very soon. You cannot imagine what labour,

what perplexity, what vexation I have endured in arranging a prodigious multiplicity of materials, in supplying omissions, in searching for papers, buried in different masses, and all this besides the exertion of composing and polishing: many a time have I thought of giving it up. However, though I shall be uneasily sensible of its many deficiencies, it will certainly be to the world a very valuable and peculiar volume of biography, full of literary and characteristic *anecdotes told with authenticity and in a lively manner.*”

Sometimes we can follow his progress. He writes to Mr. Malone: “The *Magnum Opus* advances. I have revised p. 216. The additions which I have received are a Spanish quotation from Mr. Cambridge; an account of Johnson at Warley Camp from Mr. Langton; and Johnson’s letters to Mr. Hastings—three in all—one of them long and admirable; but what sets the diamonds in pure gold of Ophir is a letter from Mr. Hastings to me, illustrating them and their writer. I had this day the honour of a long visit from the late governor-general of India.”

By February 8, 1790, he was within a short walk of Mr. Malone, busy revising and having got through nearly one half. “I intended,” he said, “to have it printed upon what is called an *English* letter, which would have made it look better; but, upon calculation, it would have made two quarto volumes, and

two quarto volumes for one Life would have appeared exorbitant, though in truth it is a view of much of the literature, and many of the literary men, of Great Britain for more than half a century. I have therefore taken a smaller type, called *Pica*, and even upon that I am afraid its bulk will be very large. I think it will be without exception the most entertaining book you ever read. I cannot be done with printing before the end of August."

How careful he was in his revision will be seen from the following: "Langton is in town, and dines with me to-morrow quietly, and revises his *Collectanea*." Even his title-page caused him much anxious thought.

When it came to the printing, poor Mr. Boswell was much distracted. He was in pecuniary difficulties and pressed for money, and would willingly have mortgaged his great work. He seems to have had originally an offer of £1000 from Robinson, a publisher. But this he appears to have declined, though later he would have gladly taken it. He finally, however, determined on publishing at his own risk, as he had printed at his own expense: and the result showed his sagacity. On Boswell's death, the remaining copies of the second edition were sold to Dilly for three hundred pounds, which would represent about two hundred copies.

## CHAPTER II.

### BOSWELL'S SECOND THOUGHTS.

THE great and unique memoir which has immortalized the name of James Boswell, it would be vain to praise and idle to condemn. Criticism is not yet spent in doing justice to its merits, and a quaint and even affectionate interest may be found in studying the character of the biographer, his vanity, conscious and unconscious ; his seeming ignorance of what made him ridiculous ; his little passions of envy and malice ; with those other acts and oddities which have often seriously raised the question whether he was really an inspired idiot or a man of sense and wisdom. We certainly owe it to his foolishness that he was so outspoken, and put in print, without restraint as to names or persons, so many things that must have excited annoyance and given pain. There was no attempt at delicacy. Where he found himself, on a rare occasion, compelled to suppress the name, under the disguise of "an eminent person," or "a literary friend of his," the person thus dealt with could be readily identified by his friends, owing to circumstances of time and place carefully furnished ; or, if

he did escape discovery, must perhaps have felt his feeling of affection or veneration for the sage turned to bitterness and anger. Yet no one sent out to purchase a stick, as Johnson did, or cudgelled the author in a bookseller's shop, as Goldsmith did a bookseller.

But though suffered to take his course without being inconvenienced, he found himself obliged for various reasons to make alterations in his great work, having embroiled himself with various persons who clamoured loudly against too open statements that affected their reputation. The little controversies that followed are really entertaining, and throw much light on the character of this prince of biographers. We find ourselves giving him a higher character for sagacity, though this is gained at the expense of character. For it does seem as though Mr. Boswell had been guided in his revelations by a sort of graduated measure; as fear of consequences; the being indifferent when the persons were weak, as in the case of women and parsons, or of those whom he disliked and despised, as rivals or competitors in the task he had on hand, and whom he hated with a feverish jealousy (in which case he might presume they were weaker than he was); or in the case of those who were dead and could make no sign. In most cases he kept these considerations before his eyes, and in most instances this "canny" view was borne out by the event.

A collation of the two editions—all he lived to

publish—and a view of the “second thoughts” which rose in his curious mind, will, we venture to prophesy, be found entertaining. While some have claimed for him a noble heroic soul, whose simple devotion to Johnson led him into follies, we shall, perhaps, be led to see him in the character known to the French as “*Le Niais* ;” *i. e.*, a man whom it is impossible to convince that he is, or has been, ridiculous.

§ *Miscellaneous Specimens of Alterations.*

To these second thoughts we owe some pleasant touches—such as in the description of Lord Errol: “From perhaps a weakness, or more fancy and warmth of feeling than is quite reasonable, I could expatiate on Lord Errol’s good qualities.” This seemed a droll way to be affected by a single Scotch nobleman—as it was, no doubt, pointed out to him. Our author then amends it by making it more general, and more absurd, by inserting after “reasonable,” “my mind is ever impressed with admiration for persons of high birth ‘and’ . . .” Lord Errol’s “agreeable look” was changed into *manners*. When the account of the battle of Culloden was given to him, he says, “I *several* times burst into tears,” which later became “I could not refrain from tears.” After declaring that Johnson was courted by “all the great and all the eminent persons of his time,” he



altered "great" to "high"—thinking, perhaps, that great and eminent were synonymous. "High and eminent," however, seemed strange, so he eventually reverted to "great." Mr. Capel Lofft, he declared, had "a mind so much exercised in various *exertions*"—not an unhappy word, and of some force. But he changed it to "departments." "Births are nothing," he makes Johnson say in reference to notability, but which he changed to "the register of births proves nothing." He quotes Warton's account of Johnson at Oxford: "I once had been a whole morning sliding [skating] in Christchurch meadow," &c., the meaning of which is that Boswell had left both words until he could ascertain from Mr. Warton which was correct. It now stands "sliding."

Some of the corrections arise out of Boswell's own eagerness to correct others. As when quoting a letter of Cave's, suggesting to Birch that "your society should buy it," *i. e.*, "Irene." "It is strange," says Boswell, "that a printer who knew so much as Cave, should conceive so ludicrous a fancy as that the Royal Society should purchase a play." In his new edition he writes, "Dele note, and read as follows:—'Not the Royal Society, but the Society for the Encouragement of Learning;' the "ludicrous fancy," therefore, being his own. Mentioning some praise of Johnson in *The Champion*, he says, "This paper is well known to have been written by the celebrated Henry Fielding.

But, I suppose, Johnson was not informed of his being indebted to him for this civility; for, if he had been apprised of that circumstance, as he was very sensible of praise, he probably would not have spoken with so little respect of Fielding, as we shall find he afterwards did." Discovering that the passage was written by Ralph, he erased these remarks. In the passage in which he mentions Hooker and other lights of the English Church as "giants, as they were well characterized by one whose authority, were I to name him, would stamp a reverence on the opinion," he alters "one" to "A GREAT PERSONAGE," meaning, of course, the King. Mr. Croker says that "some of his Majesty's illustrious family have condescended to permit these inquiries to extend to them," and without result. It is certainly not likely that the old Dukes of Sussex, York, or Gloucester, would be likely to know to what person or on what occasion the happy expression was used. Neither is it very original. But I think the occasion and person can be supplied. It is scarcely known with what jealous care Boswell protected the materials he had gathered so laboriously; and I have seen the two leaves which he published with the report of the King's conversation with Johnson (fixing the price at half a guinea), so as to secure the copyright. Miss Burney tells us that he came down to Windsor, when she met him in the courtyard, to get permission from the King to publish

this conversation; and it was probably then that he heard the remark used.

Further illustrations can be given of Boswell's eager care and particularity in the correction of his work. He mentioned one Rolt:—"This was a sufficient specimen of his vanity and impudence. But he gave a more eminent proof of it in our sister kingdom, as Dr. Johnson informed me. When Akenside's 'Pleasures of the Imagination' first came out, he did not put his name to the poem. Rolt went over to Dublin, published an edition of it, and put his own name to it. Upon the fame of this he lived for several months, being entertained at the best tables as 'the ingenious Mr. Rolt.'" Boswell had originally set down this proceeding as "a literary fraud." But he grew nervous. "It has occurred to me," he says, "that when I mention 'a *literary fraud*,' by Rolt, I may not be able to authenticate it, as Johnson is dead, and he may have relations who may take it up as an offence, perhaps a *libel*. Courtenay suggests, that you may perhaps get intelligence whether it was *true*. The Bishop of Dromore can probably tell, as he knows a great deal about Rolt. In case of doubt, should I not cancel the leaf, and either omit the curious anecdote, or give it as a story which Johnson laughingly told as having circulated?"

This was put in the form of a note:—

"I have had inquiry made in Ireland as to this

story, but do not find it recollected there. I give it on the authority of Dr. Johnson, to which may be added, that of the 'Biographical Dictionary,' and 'Biographia Dramatica,' in both of which it has stood many years. Mr. Malone observes, that the truth probably is, not that an edition was published with Rolt's name in the title-page, but that, the poem being then anonymous, Rolt acquiesced in its being attributed to him in conversation."—BOSWELL. In the late edition of Chalmers's Biographical Dictionary, the foregoing story is indeed noticed, but with an observation that it has been *refuted*.—CROKER.

To the blind Mrs. Williams Boswell was not partial, and alluded to her infirmities in a not very delicate fashion, describing her as making tea "which she did with sufficient dexterity, notwithstanding her blindness, though her manner of satisfying herself that the cups were full enough was a little awkward. She put her finger down a certain way till she felt the tea touch in it." Now it was characteristic that many had noted with curiosity what test this poor blind lady employed; but Mrs. Thrale and others had been pleased to see with what delicacy she contrived it, viz., by putting her finger on the outside of the cup. It seems that he was corrected, and it is amusing to see the mode in which he accepts the correction:—

"I have since had reason to think that I was mistaken; for I have been informed by a lady, who was

long intimate with her, and likely to be a more accurate observer of such matters, that she had acquired such a niceness of touch, as to know by the feeling on the *outside* of the cup, how near it was to being full."

This lady was Miss Reynolds—"Renny Dear," who notes the fact in her reminiscences.

But Mr. Boswell would not alter his text, as being a record of what he had observed, except so far as to put for "was" "appeared to me," and after "awkward" "for I fancied that."

Another amusing instance is found in his treatment of the passage in Smollett's letter on the "great Cham of literature." This was originally printed as "the great *Chum* of literature," and Mr. Boswell, with pleasant compassion, says in a note: "Had Dr. Smollett been bred at an English University he would have known that a *chum* is a student who lives with another. A *chum of literature* is nonsense." However, it was pointed out to him that *cham* was intended, and he apologised handsomely in his second edition. There was application for the discharge from the Navy of the Black Servant—Barber, who was released from this service: "he recollects the precise time to be three days before King George II. died." This particularity about such a trifle seemed ludicrous, and he omitted the passage.

In one of his early interviews with Johnson he remarks to the sage: "It is very good in you, *Mr.*

*Johnson*, to allow me to be with you thus." For some reason, I fancy, because it seemed too obsequious a mode of address, he struck out "Mr. Johnson." A woman's preaching was like "a dog walking on his *hinder* legs," which now stands "hind" legs.

Another note of character is, that our author, after suppressing a name in his first edition, often found courage to give it full in his second, as in the case of "the fashionable Baronet," to which he appends (second edition) a note, "My friend, Sir Michael Le Fenning." The reason for this compliment was that this gentleman was one of Lord Lowther's members, and Lord Lowther was Boswell's patron. In spite of many suppressions we can generally trace who was intended.

As when Boswell returned from Corsica he mentioned that a "gay friend had advised him not to be a lawyer." A page or two further, after mentioning Wilkes, he adds, that he said nothing in defence of "my gay friend."

Wilkes, indeed, he contrives all through, to represent in a most unpleasant light, and no better specimen could be furnished of his ingenious art of embroiling people than his reporting Dr. Percy's speech, that about the Lion—that is Johnson—and *the goats* lying down together. He contrived, too, without intending it, to depreciate his gay friend, by awkwardly introducing

him as “*a* Mr. Wilkes,” a note being supplied in the “Corrections,” dele “*a*.”

How careful his revision was will be seen by other specimens. Johnson had taken leave of him, saying, “Get you gone, in a curious mode of inviting him to stay.” It was, of course, intended to be “Get you gone *in*.” Mr. Boswell had alluded to “Demosthenes” Taylor, as “he was called, (that is, the translator of Demosthenes).” Dr. Farmer “wondered how a Scotch advocate should be so perfectly uninformed as to know nothing of the best edition and the best modern editor of Demosthenes.” His surprise was communicated to Mr. Nicholls, probably not in such offensive terms, who returned “Boswell’s note of his readiness to correct.” Accordingly we now find it altered to “Translator.”

A droll mistake is his describing Johnson as “pronouncing a triumphant *apotheosis* on Pope,” which he fitly altered to eulogium.

Talking with Johnson and old General Oglethorpe, the former said, “Pray, General, give us an account of the siege of Bender.” This is corrected to “Belgrade.” It seems curious what should have put Bender into Boswell’s head. But a few evenings before he told Johnson he intended to write a history of Sweden, and he had not yet “emptied his head” of Charles XII. and the siege of Bender. There is a passage that runs:—“Talking of a

historian and a modern moralist, he said, 'There is more thought in the moralist than in the historian. There is but a shallow stream of thought in history.' BOSWELL: 'But, surely, Sir, an historian has reflection?' JOHNSON: 'Why, yes, Sir; and so has a cat when she catches a mouse for her kitten: but she cannot write like [*Beattie*]; neither can [*Robertson*].'

These should surely be read "shallow stream of thought in *his* history," and for "*an*" historian "the" should be read. The above stood originally "she (the cat) cannot write like the moralist, neither can the historian." In the second edition he substituted his favourite stars. \* \* \* \* \* and \* \* \* \* \*, in which he was ever exact as to number. Mr. Croker, however, leaves them out, *more suo*, and gives the names within brackets, as above. So with General Paoli's remark, as to the "Grande Dame" or "Duchess of the first rank," whom Goldsmith had complimented in his play. Mr. Croker says it was Mrs. Horton. But Goldsmith's compliment on the first night was received with applause directed to the Duke of Gloucester, who sat in the boxes, and who had just married Lady Waldegrave.

It is incredible with what bad taste Boswell introduced the names of ladies of high rank of his acquaintance, and the instances of their good nature to him, which he seems to hint were due to his own



irresistible attractions. One of these was Lady Diana Beauclerk—the divorced Lady Bolingbroke and wife of his friend. He tells the public that “he had a playful Bett with her,” and then introduces his venerable friend discoursing on her in a way that none of her friends could mistake for a moment:—“While we were alone, I endeavoured, as well as I could, to apologise for a lady who had been divorced from her husband by Act of Parliament. I said that he had used her very ill, and that the gentleman on whose account she was divorced had gained her heart while thus unhappily situated. *Seduced, perhaps, by the charms of the lady* in question, I thus attempted to palliate what I was sensible could not be justified; for when I had finished my harangue, my venerable friend gave me a proper check:—‘My dear Sir, never accustom your mind to mingle virtue and vice. The woman’s a — and there’s an end on’t.’ ”

Mr. Croker omits the offensive word which Boswell prints in full.

Beauclerk was dead when this appeared, as, indeed, it must be said, so were many of the persons about whom Mr. Boswell’s strongest anecdotes were given. He appears, however, to have tried to soften the matter by awkwardly introducing a compliment in his “Corrections.” “After ‘me,’ read ‘I sat in a state of anxiety which even the charming society of Lady Di. Beauclerk could not dissipate.’ ” So with

the account of the lady of his acquaintance who maintained that "conjugal obligations were reciprocal." This strange conversation, and Johnson's just characterisms of the lady" in his own forcible way, certainly points to the Honourable Mrs. Stuart, who must have recognized herself. (See "Boswelliana," p. 14.)

In his capital criticisms on Garrick's "Archer," which embraces a true and valuable principle of acting, Johnson objects, "The gentleman should break through the footman;" originally it was "should break *out* through the footman." "Harris is a sound, solid scholar," stood originally "a sound, *sullen* scholar," which seems Johnsonissimus, especially as it is supported by the phrase that follows, "he does not like interlopers."

Again:—"Nay, you do more good to them (the poor) by spending it in luxury than by giving it; for by spending it in luxury you make them exert." This Boswell compressed into, "Nay, you do more good to them by spending it in luxury: you make them exert."

In his first edition he describes Johnson saying of a gentleman, "Mr. \* \* \* \* 's character is very *short*—he fills a chair. . . . Now, there is \* \* \* \* . You praised that man with such disproportion that I was incited to attack him." In his correction Boswell gives the names in full, Long and Pepys,

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with elaborate compliments, adding, but the first, who “only filled a chair,” had told him of a kind and flattering speech of Johnson’s about himself (Boswell). Again he reports Dr. Scott as relating that Blackstone composed his “Commentaries” with a bottle of port before him. This was not a very serious charge to make, but Dr. Scott, afterwards Lord Stowell, found that it was twisted into an insinuation of inebriety, and was annoyed at the publication of the story. He was well acquainted with the family, and wrote them his excuses. Boswell must have come in for some share of reproof, for we find him carefully trimming, and inserting after “Blackstone,” *a sober man*, and after “bottle of port before him,” the flourish, “and found his mind invigorated and supported by a temperate use of it.” But it will be seen, that though he qualifies, he will not suppress.

Having mentioned “an evening society for the purposes of conversation,” of which “we were all members,” and at which nothing was given to eat, Johnson declared it would not last. The following passage, for some reason, is suppressed:—“The event proved the justice of Johnson’s opinion as to the impracticability of getting people to meet when they know there is absolutely nothing to touch the palate; for this society, though held at the house of a person deservedly much esteemed, and composed of

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very eminent men, could not be preserved from decay."

The most characteristic are the Scotticisms plentifully scattered through the work. "I also learnt *some* from Dr. Laurence," altered to "learnt" simply; "My friend will no doubt *startle*," changed to "be surprised:" and very commonly this form—"I suppose there is almost no language," changed to "we scarcely know of a language."

Such, too, are phrases like the following: "Which, I should think," altered to "I believe;" "So shall I use it, in time coming," altered to "hereafter;" "I had taken a hearty dinner," altered to "eaten." But there is one pleasant sentence which he re-shaped twice. Speaking of the Scotch trees, he had written, "There are not a great many, *to be sure*: but I could have shown him more than two at Balmuto, from whence my ancestor came. In the grotto we saw *a wonderful large lobster claw*." In the second edition, "to be sure" is omitted, and there is added to the Balmuto connection, "which now belongs to a branch of my family." But the description of the lobster claw was amended into the more dignified shape, "we saw a lobster claw wonderfully large." Somewhat elated by his ancestral feeling—for we can follow the workings of his transparent mind—it finally occurred to him, in the third edition, that there was a triviality in alluding to the "lobster claw" at all; it accordingly

stands, "The grotto was ingeniously constructed." "We were a good deal drowsy," becomes "something drowsy;" "We spoke none," "We had no conversation;" and "fowls were *caught*," altered to "caught:" a moor "in many places so *wet*," now so "silly;" "much *liker*," "much more like;" "Yes, *sir*. I believe you *was*;" "I *awaked*," for "I *awoke*." Boswell uses a curious word, "dawling," which subsequent editors have altered to "dawdling."

"Nothing," he wrote, "is more uneasy to the mind," which he changed to "painful;" "Were much thought of," becomes "were of considerable estimation;" "The presence of a stranger was no restraint," becomes "*had*" no restraint; and a curious testimony to his eagerness to be accurate is found in the alteration of "a gentleman *we* did not know," to "*he*" did not know.

Many more specimens could be added. But these will suffice.

## CHAPTER III.

### BOSWELL'S "DISLIKES."

#### § *Treatment of Bishop Percy.*

BISHOP PERCY, it will be recollected, figures a good deal in the Boswellian conversations, and received some rude hugs from the great "Bear of Letters." As some of the speeches and retorts addressed to him were of rather an offensive kind, the Bishop, with a sagacious mistrust that he would not figure with dignity in the chronicle, while kindly sending Boswell a vast number of communications filled with details of Johnson's early life, requested that his name might not be mentioned in the work. Boswell felt that the incidents in which Percy appeared were among the most piquant of his collection, and replied, flatly refusing to comply with the request, declaring that it was a duty he owed "to the authenticity of his book, to its respectability, and to the credit of his illustrious friend, to"—and the reader will wonder what was the shape of this sacred obligation—"to introduce *as many names of eminent persons as I can.*" "Believe me, my lord," he goes on, "you are not the

only Bishop in the number of great men with which my pages are graced. I am quite resolute in this matter." The Prelate had no redress. There was something, indeed, ungracious in the gusto with which Boswell recorded Johnson's speeches and sneers at the expense of his episcopal friend, such as that about the "History of the Grey Rat." But the warm discussion on Pennant—one of the most dramatic in the book, and evidently recorded with an amazing accuracy, shows that Boswell possessed a dull *niaiserie* utterly inconsistent with the faithful acumen and accuracy which admirers have claimed for him. Annoyed at the attack on his connection and patron the Duke of Northumberland, the Bishop had retorted by a reflection on Johnson's failing eyesight, which had nearly brought about an open rupture. As it was, rude language had been used. However, a few words of good-natured explanation, and all was made up; for as Goldsmith said to Johnson after a similar misunderstanding, "it is much from you, sir, that I can take ill." Unfortunately the Bishop had been indiscreet enough to confide to Boswell that he "was uneasy at what had passed," for a person had witnessed the scene, a friend of the Duke of Northumberland, who would of course report how contemptuously the friend of Johnson had been treated. On this very natural speech the busybody Boswell proceeded to work, and, as I said, exhibits his mind and

its processes to posterity in a fashion incredibly stupid and "fussy." We imagine the Bishop's feelings as he read the opening words of this part of the affair, "for there was a man," he was made to say, "who had recently been admitted into the confidence of the Northumberland Family, *to whom he hoped to appear more respectable* by showing him how intimate he was with the great Dr. Johnson, and now the gentleman would go away with an impression much to his disadvantage, as if Johnson treated him with disregard, which might do him an essential injury." So sycophantic and candid a confession of motives is rarely found. It is evident a warm remonstrance and even contradiction followed, for we find in the later editions "the gentleman recently admitted, &c.," becomes merely "acquainted with the Northumberland family," the "essential injury" that might follow is omitted. And the "*great* Dr. Johnson," which suggests the idea that Percy had been boasting in the country of his intimacy, was toned down to "Dr. Johnson."

Boswell having reported this to Johnson—who remarked that "this only came of stratagem"—a fresh indirect reflection on the Bishop, he proceeded to speak of Dr. Percy "in the handsomest terms"—or "manner," as Boswell chose to alter it later :

"Then, Sir," said I, "may I be allowed to suggest a mode by which you may effectually counteract any



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unfavourable report of what passed? I will write a letter to you upon the subject of the unlucky contest of that day, and you will be kind enough to put in writing, as an answer to that letter, what you have now said, and as Lord Percy is to dine with us at General Paoli's soon, I will take an opportunity to read the correspondence in his lordship's presence." This friendly scheme was accordingly carried into execution without Dr. Percy's knowledge . . . . I contrived that Lord Percy should hear *the correspondence*. *Our friend Percy was raised higher in the estimation of those by whom he wished most to be regarded.* I breakfasted the day after with him, and informed him of my scheme, and its happy completion, for which he thanked me in the warmest terms, and was highly delighted with Dr. Johnson's letter in his praise, of which I gave him a copy. Dr. Johnson having afterwards asked me if I had given him a copy of it, and being told I had, was offended, and insisted that I should get it back, which I did."

The passage in italics must have also given offence: for "our friend Boswell" later shaped it "Thus every unfavourable impression was obviated that could possibly have been made on those by whom," &c. Now, Johnson's letter was warm and handsome in its terms, and would have been a testimonial to his merits in the eyes of Lord Percy and the other guests. Naturally Dr. Percy was grateful and pleased at the

idea, and its being so successfully carried out. But the meddling Boswell did not show him the letter to which Johnson's letter was an answer; and which *he* had written:—"My dear Sir.—I beg leave to address you in behalf of our friend Dr. Percy, *who was much hurt by what you said to him that day we dined at his house . . .* Percy is sensible that you did not mean to injure him; but he is vexed to think that your behaviour to him on that occasion may be interpreted *as a proof that he is despised by you*, which I know is not the case. I have told him, that the charge of being narrow-minded was only as to the particular point in question; and that he had the merit of being a martyr to his noble family.

"*Earl Percy is to dine with General Paoli next Friday; and I should be sincerely glad to have it in my power to satisfy his lordship how well you think of Dr. Percy, who, I find, apprehends that your good opinion of him may be of very essential consequence; and who assures me that he has the highest respect and the warmest affection for you.*"

Now, it will be noted that all the italicised passages are put in the most awkward and needlessly emphatic mode that can be conceived. It was bad to read this in the "Life," but what will be said when we find that Mr. Boswell actually read it aloud at the dinner *in presence* of Lord Percy: for he used the phrase, "read the *correspondence*," thrice to Johnson: but

when writing to Percy he takes care to say that he only "read Johnson's *answer*." Finally, at the close of his characteristic episode he adds a kind of disclaimer to this effect:—"Though the Bishop of Downe kindly answered the letters which I wrote to him relative to Dr. Johnson's early history: yet, in justice to him, I think it proper to add, that the account of the foregoing conversation, and the subsequent transaction, as well as of some other conversations in which he is mentioned, has been given to the public without previous communication with his lordship.—Boswell." The meaning of which is to convey the idea that the Bishop was no party to the publication of portions of this little history: though Boswell was so dull as not to see that he was making his friend ridiculous.

That the Bishop's remonstrances on the way he was mentioned in the work were rather "art," is evident from a passage or two later introduced by Boswell. In the amusing passage about Dr. Grainger and his heroic introduction of "Lee's sing of Rats!" (changed from *now* as more dignified), Percy had originally furnished a defence of his friend—which Boswell had introduced in a note. In his second edition, Boswell maliciously supplies the following from his recollection:—"Dr. Johnson said to me, 'Percy, sir, was angry with me for laughing at his "Sugar Cane":' for he had a mind to make a great thing of Grain-

ger's rats'—and adds this comment to the Bishop's original defence of his friend. 'The above was written by the Bishop when he had not the poem itself to recur to; and though the account given of it was true at one period, yet, as Dr. Grainger afterwards altered the passage in question, the remarks in the text do not now apply to the printed poem.'” No wonder Dr. Percy wrote to his friend Anderson—“Boswell's ludicrous account of the 'Sugar Cane' deserves no attention.”

Indeed, Dr. Percy's disgust at his treatment is shown in his later comments; the account of the manner of writing the dictionary, “as given by Mr. Boswell, is confused and erroneous, and a moment's reflection will convince every person of judgment, could not be correct.” And again he adds:

“Mr. Boswell describes Levett as a man of a strange grotesque appearance. This is misrepresented.” “Mr. Boswell objects to the title of the Rambler, &c. These are curious reasons.” As to Savage—“This, if true, Johnson was not likely to have confessed to Mr. Boswell, and therefore must be received as a pure invention of his own.” This seems pretty sharp.

What shows a radical weakness of character in Boswell is this idea that his reports would be accepted, as matter of course, by those who figured unpleasantly in them. “One of them,” he writes of a Presbyterian Minister, “though a man of sincere good

powers, discovered a narrowness of information, &c. He talked before Johnson of fat Bishops and drowsy Deans. . . . Dr. Johnson was so highly incensed, that he said to him: 'Sir, you know no more of our church than a Hottentot.' I was sorry that he brought this on himself." Yet in the first edition the name of this divine is given—Mr. Dunn, Boswell's own parish minister, with whom they were dining. So with the case of young Mr. Tytler, who was described "with his forehead ready *brased*," and giving a picture of an offensive and forward young man, set down by Johnson. This Boswell had to amend into "one gentleman in company expressing his opinion," &c. The treatment of Sir A. Macdonald—and the rather degrading *amende* which Boswell had to make—is shown at length by Mr. Croker.

#### § *Treatment of Sir John Hawkins.*

Mr. Boswell's general behaviour to Sir J. Hawkins was malevolent, and marked with a certain duplicity. When Sir John's "Life of Johnson" appeared, Mr. Boswell was stung by the way in which he was mentioned: "He had long been solicited by Mr. James Boswell, a native of Scotland, and one that highly valued him, to accompany him on a journey to the Hebrides." Miss Hawkins relates, in rather graphic terms, what followed: "I remember the

first introduction of Boswell on what may be called the Johnsonian stage. What is ludicrously called his *earwiggling*, began to attract notice; and my father inquired of Mr. Langton, who this novel performer was, meaning rather, I believe, to be on good terms with him, as a frequenter in Bolt Court. The answer he received was a caution against opening his door to him. Not only were his visits described to be long, but he was known to carry, as was said, perhaps by way of metaphor, his night-cap in his pocket, and to be blind to all inconvenience, and deaf to all hints, when at leisure.

“My father and he, however, grew a little acquainted; and when the ‘Life’ of their friend came out, Boswell showed himself very uneasy under an injury, which he was much embarrassed in defining. He called on my father, and being admitted, complained of the manner in which he was enrolled amongst Johnson’s friends, which was as Mr. James Boswell of Auchinleck.\*

“Where was the offence? It was one of those, which a complainant hardly dares to embody in words, he would only repeat, ‘Well, but, *Mr. James Boswell*, surely, surely, *Mr. James Boswell*.’

“My father relieved him by guessing with some humour, that the distinction bestowed on a public singer or dancer, would have better satisfied him.

\* Hawkins’ Johnson, 472.

‘I know,’ said he, ‘Mr. Boswell, what you mean; you would have had me say that Johnson undertook this tour with THE Boswell.’ He could not indeed absolutely covet this mode of proclamation; he would, perhaps, have been content with ‘the celebrated,’ or ‘the well-known,’ but he could not confess quite so much; he therefore acquiesced in the amendment proposed, but he was forced to depart without any promise of correction in a subsequent edition.”

This seems likely to be true; and the idea of Mr. Boswell placidly accepting the idea of being described as “*the Boswell*” is quite characteristic. But he registered the insult, especially when he found that the new edition had appeared without alteration. Two years afterwards, in 1789, he was at work revising the first pages of his book, and had a Roland for the Knight’s Oliver ready.

“P.S.—Pray, by return of post, help me with a word. In censuring Sir J. Hawkins’s book, I say, ‘There is throughout the whole of it a dark, uncharitable cast, which puts the most unfavourable construction on my illustrious friend’s conduct.’ Malone maintains *cast* will not do; he will have ‘malignancy.’ Is that not too strong? how would ‘disposition’ do?

“Hawkins is no doubt very malevolent. *Observe how he talks of me as quite unknown.*”

It will hardly be credited that only a few weeks before this secret consultation Mr. Boswell had break-

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fasted with the Knight, and our author was writing to his friends that he was, he believed, a good man, but very mean for his fortune. And later, within a week or two of the little plot, he was declaring that they were "in good social plight" together, and exceedingly well—that he had entertained Hawkins, and Hawkins him. All the winter, too, they had been intimate, he said. Yet, all the while he was putting down the most extraordinary accusations—charges of theft, &c. Hawkins was in bad health, and died soon after, otherwise these accusations and insinuations could not have appeared.

One would be inclined to suppose that they were owing to the promptings of Mr. Malone, who seemed to have loathed Hawkins, calling him "a detestable fellow," accusing him of stealing Johnson's watch, stick, of lying, &c. However, the Knight himself was not slack in accusing others of purloining similar articles. Some of these comments show a strange spirit of perversion. Thus Boswell: and I cannot trace the least foundation for the following dark and uncharitable assertion by Sir John Hawkins:—"The apparition of his departed wife was altogether of the terrific kind, and hardly afforded him a hope that she was in a state of happiness." Terrific may be too strong a word, but we certainly find Johnson perpetually praying for *the repose* of his Tetty's soul—"and that she might finally be received



into eternal happiness." But in another point Mr. Boswell is nearly right. He says:—"Mrs. Piozzi and Sir John Hawkins have strangely mis-stated the history of Goldsmith's situation and Johnson's friendly interference, when this novel was sold." Mr. Croker thinks it odd that Boswell, "who affects such extreme accuracy, should say that Hawkins has *strangely mis-stated* this affair, is very surprising; what Hawkins says (*Life*, p. 420), is merely that, under a pressing necessity, he wrote the Vicar of Wakefield, and sold it to Newberry for 40*l.* Hawkins's account is not in any respect inconsistent with Boswell's; and the difference between the prices stated, even if Hawkins be in error, is surely not sufficient to justify the charge of a *strange mis-statement*."—CROKER.

Surely Hawkins is altogether wrong, 1st, as to price; 2nd, in conveying that under a pressure he wrote it, whereas it was lying by him; 3rd, that it was Johnson who sold it. Boswell, too, is much astray as to Garrick's candidature for the Club. In a passage taken *verbatim et literatim* from Malone's notes, he declares that, though Johnson was offended at Garrick's free and easy tone, "*He'll be of us!*" he was regularly proposed and elected "some time afterwards," by which one would fancy he had to wait a short time. When we find that *ten years* elapsed before he was admitted, Sir John's version seems to express the truth better than Boswell's. The author-

ship of Lexiphanes, Boswell says Sir John Hawkins ascribes to Kenrick. But only in his first edition. In reference to the application for the increase of Johnson's pension, Mr. Boswell says, "it is strange that Sir John Hawkins should have related that the application was made by Sir Joshua Reynolds, when he could so easily have been informed of the truth by inquiring of Sir Joshua. *Sir John's carelessness to ascertain facts is very remarkable.*" That is to say, to find out "that the celebrated James Boswell, Esq., of Auchinleck," took part in the matter. Yet Sir John is so far right, Boswell having acted merely as clerk. But Sir Joshua really "undertook to settle it."

We shall see, however, that it is for Johnson's deathbed Mr. Boswell reserves his onslaught; after admitting, however, that in Sir John's "*compilation*"—not life, mark!—there were some passages of unquestionable merit.

Hawkins, when dealing with Johnson's love for his antique wife, speculates that it was "dissembled," *i.e.*, assumed or learned by rote. On this Boswell says, this view probably arose "*from a want of similar feelings in his own breast.*" (!) The point of this allusion is, that Sir John was assumed to have "dissembled" himself. Boswell, indeed, sneers at the Knight's use of the word "dissembled," though the latter had full warranty for what was an antique sense given to the word, it being thus used by Farquhar in the first

scene of the *Beaux' Stratagem*. Boswell's dislike, it seems, made him allude in this unbecoming way to a malicious story, that he had "married an old woman for the sake of her money." Miss Hawkins vindicates her father, and assumes too hastily that Boswell had actually set this charge down in words, and also that "he was the son of a carpenter," in which she was mistaken. "Unless," she adds, "marrying a very pretty woman twenty-six years of age, when he himself was seven years older, can in any way be distorted into this baseness. Nor can I admit that my father married even for the sake of her money. He had been the favourite of her father, Peter Storer, of Highgate."

We may pause a moment to introduce Mrs. Johnson here. In July, 1751, we find one Mitchell writing to Mr. Johnson a pressing letter, declaring that Mrs. Johnson has owed £2 since August 12, 1749, and threatening to proceed. Now, in 1751, as Boswell tells us, Johnson's circumstances were wretched, and "Tetty" was rather extravagant in dress. This helps us, to a certain extent, to confute another of Mr. Croker's fancies. "Hawkins," he says, "very uncharitably attributes to the influence of Savage a separation which took place (*as he alone asserts*) between Johnson and his wife about this period, *i.e.*, 1749. The whole course of Johnson's life and conduct warrants us in supposing that such temporary

separation (*if Hawkins be even so far correct*), must have been produced by pecuniary distress, and not by an interruption of affection. All these stories contradict one another; and, indeed, even the sour Hawkins adds, that Johnson was too strict in his morals to have afforded his wife any reasonable cause for jealousies." Yet this debt of Mrs. Johnson's surely tends to support Hawkins's statement.

"Here," says Boswell, "I am enabled to refute a very unjust reflection against Johnson and his faithful servant Francis Barber, by Sir John Hawkins, as if he had been unjust towards one Heely, "whom Sir John chooses to call a *relation* of Dr. Johnson's." For he explains that Heely had been married only to Johnson's cousin. It will hardly be credited that Hawkins states that "Heeley's relation to Johnson was *by marriage*." He further adds that Johnson had been "very liberal to him." And he does not vindicate Barber at all.

In one point, too, Boswell was singularly unfair. The deceased Knight, in his second edition, had altered and softened many of the passages, to which our biographer takes exception; yet in many instances quotes from the first edition, ignoring the alterations in the second. Again:

"Sir John Hawkins has given a long detail of it, in that manner vulgarly, but significantly, called *rigmarole*; in which, amidst an ostentatious exhibi-

tion of arts and artists, he talks of 'proportions of a column being taken from that of the human figure, and *adjusted by nature*—masculine and feminine—in a man, *sesquioctave* of the head, and in a woman *sesquisonal*; nor has he failed to introduce a jargon of musical terms, which do not seem much to correspond with the subject, but serve to make up the heterogeneous mass. To follow the Knight through all this would be an useless fatigue to myself, and not a little disgusting to my readers. I shall, therefore, only make a few remarks upon his statement."

When Sir John makes some errors in transcribing from one of Johnson's notebooks, he says "it would have been better to have left blanks than to write nonsense." When he comes to speak of Lauder's Milton imposture, he quotes Johnson's praise of Milton, and says:—

"Surely this is inconsistent with 'enmity towards Milton,' which Sir John Hawkins imputes to Johnson upon this occasion, adding, 'I could all along observe that Johnson seemed to approve not only of the design, but of the argument; and seemed to exult in a persuasion, that the reputation of Milton was likely to suffer by this discovery. That he was not privy to the imposture, I am well persuaded; that he wished well to the argument, may be inferred from the Preface, which indubitably was written by Johnson,'"

But here Boswell is wrong. Johnson's praises were of Milton as *poet*; the Knight was speaking of Johnson's prejudice against his *character*.

Hawkins died before Boswell published his work. In his first page we have seen him consulting with Malone whether he should use the phrase that "in Hawkins' narrative there is a dark uncharitable *cast*," Malone charitably recommending that the word should be "malignancy." In a note he describes him as "Mr. John Hawkins, an attorney," "who upon occasion of presenting *some* address to the King, accepted the *usual offer* of knighthood. By *assiduous attendance* upon Johnson in his last illness, he obtained the office of one of his executors, *in consequence* of which the booksellers employed him to publish an edition of Johnson's works, and to write a preface." Now all this ingenious depreciation is distorted by animosity. Hawkins was one of Johnson's oldest friends, and nearly a year before his death (in February, 1784) had been asked by him to prepare his will and act as his executor. The description "an attorney" was studiously offensive. The choice of the booksellers, who sent a deputation to him on Johnson's death, was a deep mortification to Boswell.

Mentioning Johnson's poem, "The Vanity of Human Wishes," Boswell states that Hawkins, "with solemn inaccuracy," represents it to have been

written from disappointment at the failure of his tragedy. So blinded was "the cock biographer," as Walpole calls him, by his fury, that he makes Hawkins say the very *reverse* of what he wrote. "We are *not*," he writes, "therefore to impute it to the disappointment" (!)

Speaking of Savage, in a note, Mr. Boswell says:— "Sir John Hawkins, p. 86, tells us, 'The event [Savage's retirement] is *antedated* in the poem "London;" but in every particular, except the difference of a year, what is there said of the departure of *Thales* must be understood of Savage, and looked upon as *true history*.' This conjecture is, I believe, entirely groundless. I have been assured that Johnson said he was not so much as acquainted with Savage when he wrote his 'London.' If the departure mentioned in it was the departure of Savage, the event was not *antedated* but *foreseen*; for 'London' was published in May, 1738, and Savage did not set out for Wales till July, 1739. However well Johnson could defend the credibility of *second sight*, he did not pretend that he himself was possessed of that faculty."

This is sarcastic, and the passage so awkwardly expressed as to be open to Boswell's remark. But before Boswell's work was published, Sir John altered it to "anticipated the departure," but left the words "true history." The point of his statement, viz., that

Johnson was referring to Savage, is very well founded, as the lines—

"resolv'd from vice and London far  
To breathe in distant fields a purer air,  
And, fixed in Cambria's solitary shore,  
Give to St. David one true Briton more."

Now Sir John tells us that in the very year of the publication of the poem, it was settled that Savage was to go to live in Wales.

But Boswell's final assault was reserved for the end of the Knight's book. The important part the Knight took in the closing scenes of Johnson's life must have filled him with annoyance and mortification. He winds up by accusing him of stealing Johnson's property. Hawkins, it seems, observing two MS. volumes of Johnson's lying about, put them in his pocket, declaring that he wished to keep them from falling into the hands of persons whom he suspected might take them. When Johnson asked for them, he gave them up. He was Johnson's executor, it must be recollected. This explanation he gave in his second edition, no doubt obliged to do so by the malignant reports of Malone, who in his "Diary" charges him with stealing a walking-stick and other articles. Boswell, all through, was inspired by Malone. The droll part of it is that Boswell himself had read these valuable papers, and had actually been inclined to steal them. Mr. Croker's comment is worthy of the occasion.

"I cannot tell what Hawkins's apology to Johnson



may have been, but the excuses which he alleges in his book are contemptible, and prove the *animus furandi* ; but it is *not* certain that the volume which Hawkins took was one of these two quartos ; and it *is* certain that a destruction of papers took place a day or two before that event. There can be no doubt that Barber detected and reported, as was his duty, Hawkins's attempt to purloin the volume ; and hence, I suppose, arose Hawkins's malevolence against both Johnson and Barber, and his endeavour to set up Heely as a rival," &c.

Now Hawkins expressly says that he told "those around him, particularly Mr. Langton and Mr. Strahan, that I had got both volumes, with my reasons for thus securing them." Here falls to the ground the charge of Hawkins' animosity to Barber, and Heely who "detected" him. Mr. Croker also falls into the mistake of saying that Hawkins was forced into making this explanation by Boswell's notice of the affair in his book. But Boswell's book was not published until some years after Hawkins' death !

Boswell's dislike of Hawkins and Mrs. Piozzi is founded on their having forestalled him in his task. Both had been kind and hospitable to him ; and it is not too much to say that, in Hawkins's case, certainly an action for libel would have gone against him, so blind and blundering are his attacks. Miss Lætitia Hawkins declares that Langton and her father con-

certed together as executors, "that nothing should be left in Boswell's way." And she puts the pertinent question, which has occurred to many a reader, "Why was he not present at the last scenes of Johnson's life; and it is no compliment to the character which he performed, that he does not appear to have been wanted or wished for. I do not think Johnson ever named him to my father." More strange still was the omission of Boswell's name from his will, in which more than twenty persons were left money, souvenirs, and books. Mr. Boswell had himself to thank for this; for he took offence at some rebukes which Johnson wrote to him in July. "I was, with much regret," he says, "long silent." On November 3rd, Johnson then dying, wrote to him a pathetic letter, telling him his "breath was very short, and the water increasing. Was he sick or sullen?" But Boswell was still aggrieved, for he says it was "not a little painful to him to find that he still persisted in arraigning me." What follows is extraordinary. He says that, "*however*," he wrote to him "two as kind letters as he could;" but one arrived too late to be read by Johnson. It seems more than probable that Boswell resented being thus roughly "rated," after his moderate exertion about the pension. He adds, lamely enough, on the *qui s'excuse* principle, he did not think Johnson was so ill or so near his end. The faithful Langton, however, came up and took rooms to attend

his friend. Mr. Windham sent his servant to wait on him ; all his friends mustered for this last duty. Can we wonder, then, at the silence of the will as to Boswell ? The latter is obliged thus lamely to notice it, on the ground that Adam, Taylor and others were thus unnamed. "He probably only mentioned such names as occurred to him," being near his dissolution, and having formerly given them proofs of regard. Mr. Boswell should certainly have been at his bed-side, and there is no doubt lost many advantages in the way of papers, &c., which his rival secured.

§ *Treatment of Mrs. Thrale-Piozzi.*

But it is his behaviour towards Mrs. Piozzi that seems most wanton, and, it must be said, ungrateful. At Streatham he had been welcomed with hospitality as Johnson's friend, and loaded with favours.

The reason of this unbecoming dislike is to be found, as it appears to me, in Boswell's annoyance and mortification at discovering that some of the very best of his anecdotes—the cream almost of Johnson's good things, really some of his most piquant sayings, uttered in *his* presence as well as in hers—had been noted by the "lively lady" and published. He had been forestalled in the most cruel way. Then there was her splendid collection of Johnson's letters, nearly 350 in number, all showing great intimacy and affection. He had scarcely a score to show. She was,

therefore, a greater offender than Hawkins; and it does seem, moreover, that her having fallen under public odium might encourage Mr. Boswell in his attacks. The following notes will show that Mrs. Thrale had secured a good deal of the "cream." The remark on "Kelly" and Dodd; the "*Strong Facts*" in the Ordinary of Newgate's account; the Siamese sending ambassadors to Louis XIV.; going to church; the lines "Hermit Hoar;" "talked about Tom Thumb;" "a good hater;" "the dead wit;" "just enough to light him to Hell;" remarks on being able to dispense with dress; Goldsmith and Doctor Minor; Hannah More choking him with her flattery; the gentleman that said but one word, "Richard;" the story of his reading when he met Mr. Cholmondeley; the retort on *in vino veritas*; the Scotchman's finest prospect; a ship a jail; the "many men, many women;" and "knowledge in Scotland being like food in a besieged city."

In this desperate "no case," all that was left to him was "to abuse the plaintiff"—that is, to break into those perpetually recurring attacks on her inaccuracy, in which, it must be owned, he did not succeed. At the very end of his work, he calls in his friend Malone to abuse the lady—"that despicable woman," as he calls her. "Two instances of inaccuracy," he says, "are particularly worthy of notice:— 'The natural roughness of his manner, so often men-

tioned, would, notwithstanding the regularity of his notions, burst through them all from time to time ; and he once bade a very celebrated lady, who praised him with too much zeal perhaps, or perhaps too strong an emphasis (which always offended him), “ consider what her flattery was worth, before she choked *him* with it.” A few more winters passed in the talking world, showed him the value of that friend’s commendations, however ; and he was very sorry for the disgusting speech he made her.’ ”

“ Now,” goes on Malone, “ let the genuine anecdote be contrasted with this. The person thus represented as being harshly treated, though a very celebrated lady, was *then* just come to London from an obscure situation in the country. At Sir Joshua Reynolds’s one evening, she met Dr. Johnson. She very soon began to pay her court to him in the most fulsome strain. ‘ Spare me, I beseech you, dear Madam,’ was his reply. She still *laid it on*. ‘ Pray, Madam, let us have no more of this,’ he rejoined. Not paying any attention to these warnings, she continued still her eulogy. At length, provoked by this indelicate and *vain* obtrusion of compliment, he exclaimed, ‘ Dearest lady, consider with yourself what your flattery is worth, before you bestow it so freely.’ ”

Of course, this version seems the best. But it must be said, considering that Mrs. Piozzi epitomised it to illustrate his “ occasional roughness,” she seems to

have preserved the point—which was the rude speech —“consider what your flattery is worth.” Moreover, nearly the same version is given in Kearsley’s collection, of “a certain literary female.” “Pray, Madam, before you are so lavish of your praise, ought not you to consider whether ’tis worth my acceptance or not?” Again, Malone’s view is to make out the trial of Johnson’s patience by this obscure lady as severe as possible. She persecuted him so, that his outburst should be justified. But Mrs. Piozzi speaks handsomely of his later appreciation of the lady. We have, moreover, Hannah More’s sister’s own version. “They indeed tried to pepper the highest, and it is not clear to me that the lexicographer was really the highest seasoner. The old genius was exceedingly jocular, and the young one very pleasant. She was placed next him, and they had the entire conversation to themselves.” Now, of the two accounts—Malone’s and Piozzi’s—one would say that the tone of the latter’s was more nearly consistent with this version than his elaborate description of the lady’s “vain and indelicate obtrusion of compliment.”

Again:—“One gentleman, however, who dined at a nobleman’s house in his company and that of Mr. Thrale, to whom I was obliged for the anecdote, was willing to enter the lists in defence of King William’s character; and having opposed and contradicted Johnson two or three times petulantly enough, the master

of the house began to feel uneasy, and expect disagreeable consequences: to avoid which he said, loud enough for the Doctor to hear, 'Our friend here has no meaning now in all this, except just to relate at club to-morrow how he teased Johnson at dinner to-day—this is all to do himself *honour*.' 'No, upon my word,' replied the other, 'I see no *honour* in it, whatever you may do.' 'Well, Sir!' returned Mr. Johnson, sternly, 'if you do not *see* the *honour*, I am sure I *feel* the *disgrace*.'

"This is all sophisticated. Mr. Thrale was *not* in the company, though he might have related the story to Mrs. Thrale. A friend, from whom I had the story, was present; and it was *not* at the house of a nobleman. On the observation being made by the master of the house on a gentleman's contradicting Johnson, that he had talked for the honour, &c., the gentleman muttered in a low voice, 'I see no honour in it;' and Dr. Johnson said nothing: so all the rest (though *bien trouvé*) is mere garnish."

Malone's "points" are rather quibbles. It was not at the house of a nobleman, Mrs. Piozzi avers in her notes on this very passage, but at a nobleman's *son's*—Mr. Fitzmaurice, the son of Lord Shelbune. Mr. Pottinger, she adds, was the gentleman. Or we may consider yet a third version, given by Kearsley. "Being in company with Count L——, at Lord ——'s table, the Count, thinking the Doctor ex-

pressed himself rather too dogmatically upon some subjects, observed, 'He did not at all think himself honoured by the conversation;' and, 'What's to become of me, my Lord, who feel myself actually disgraced?'" It was evident, therefore, that some such retort had got into circulation.

Stung by her allusion to his mode of note-taking, which he calls "flippant," Mr. Boswell goes on to quote the droll story of Mr. Cholmondeley:—"No one," she says, "was so attentive not to offend in all such sort of things as Dr. Johnson; nor so careful to maintain the ceremonies of life; and though he told Mr. Thrale once, that he had never sought to please till past thirty years old, considering the matter as hopeless, he had been always studious not to make enemies, by apparent preference of himself. It happened very comically, that the moment this curious conversation past, of which I was a silent auditress, was in the coach, in some distant province, either Shropshire or Derbyshire, I believe; and as soon as it was over, Mr. Johnson took out of his pocket a little book and read, while a gentleman, of no small distinction for his birth and elegance, suddenly rode up to the carriage, and paying us all his proper compliments, was desirous not to neglect Dr. Johnson; but observing that he did not see him, tapped him gently on the shoulder. 'Tis Mr. Cholmondeley,' says my husband. 'Well, Sir! and what if it is Mr. Cholmondeley?'" says



the other sternly, just lifting his eyes a moment from his book, and returning to it again with renewed avidity."

On which Mr. Boswell attacks her:—"This surely conveys a notion of Johnson, if he had been grossly rude to Mr. Cholmondeley, a gentleman whom he always loved and esteemed. Why is there a total silence as to what Mr. Cholmondeley told her?—that Johnson, who had known him from his earliest years, having been made sensible of what had doubtless a strange appearance, took occasion, when he afterwards met him, to make a very courteous and kind apology. There is another little circumstance which I cannot but remark. Her book was published in 1785; she had then in her possession a letter from Dr. Johnson, dated in 1777, which begins thus: 'Cholmondeley's story shocks me, if it be true, which I can hardly think, for I am utterly unconscious of it: I am very sorry, and very much ashamed.' Why then publish the anecdote? Or, if she did, why not add the circumstances, with which she was well acquainted?"

The answer is, that this is not told *au grand serieux* but as a pleasant bit of comedy, to illustrate the contrast between Johnson's declaration and the scene that followed. She had no *hatred* to Johnson or malice—no object in suppressing the rest. Mr. Croker met Mr. Cholmondeley, who related the anecdote with much severity towards Mrs. Piozzi, and was very sore

at being made the subject of such a debate. This must be the meaning of a note Mr. Boswell introduced in his second edition, where he compliments him as "a gentleman respected for his abilities and elegance of manners."

Here is the story of the spitted larks :—"When I one day," she says, "lamented the loss of a first cousin killed in America, 'Prythee, my dear,' said he, 'have done with canting! How would the world be the worse for it, I may ask, if all your relations were at once spitted like larks and roasted for Presto's supper.'"

"I suspect this, too, of exaggeration and distortion. I allow that he made her an angry speech; but let the circumstances fairly appear, as told by Mr. Baretti, who was present :—"Mrs. Thrale, while supping very heartily upon larks, laid down her knife and fork, and abruptly exclaimed, "O, my dear Johnson! do you know what has happened? The last letters from abroad have brought us an account that our poor cousin's head was taken off by a cannon-ball." Johnson, who was shocked both at the fact and her light unfeeling manner of mentioning it, replied, "Madam, it would give *you* very little concern if all your relations were spitted like those larks, and dressed for Presto's supper.'" "

Baretti was a monster of malignancy, and filled with hatred of his late mistress, so the "distortion"

is certain to be with him. Neither was he capable of following what was believed some of Johnson's rude speeches—the ellipse, as it were. Johnson's rebuke was directed, not to the levity, but to the over-importance with which Mrs. Thrale seemed to invest the loss of a relation killed in America. Malone had it also from Barotti, and accuses her of “eating ravenously, grossly misrepresenting.” Poor lady ! to be so unworthily pursued by three such venomous spirits.

§ *Mrs. Piozzi's breach with Johnson.*

To Mr. Hayward the world owes what is certainly the most delightful miscellany of essays on the most piquant subjects that our language possesses. Of the special subjects there treated he alone possesses the key. Some years ago he prepared Mrs. Piozzi's papers for publication, and accompanied the work with a professed vindication of her conduct from the attacks of Boswell, Lord Macaulay, and others. In the course of this duty he treated of the rupture between her and Johnson ; but, as it seems to me, fails to make out a case, and, as in so many other instances, Boswell's carefully weighed statements are not to be confuted. The point in dispute is very familiar. It is urged by her advocates that her attachment to Johnson continued almost to her marriage—that he was not treated unkindly or “driven from her house,”

and that his "rough letter" to her on her marriage was, therefore, a wanton and uncalled-for attack.

First, then, Boswell says:—"The death of Mr. Thrale made a very material alteration with respect to Johnson's reception in that family. She gradually became less assiduous to please him. Whether her attachment to him was already divided by another object, I am unable to ascertain; but it is plain that Johnson's penetration was alive to her neglect or forced attention; for on the 6th of October this year we find him making a 'parting use of the library' at Streatham, and pronouncing a prayer which he composed on leaving Mr. Thrale's family. 'Almighty God, Father of all mercy, help me by thy grace, that I may, with humble and sincere thankfulness, remember the comforts and conveniences which I have enjoyed at this place. . . . Have mercy upon me, O Lord! have mercy upon me! To thy fatherly protection, O Lord, I commend this family. Bless, guide, and defend them, &c.' One cannot read this prayer without some emotions not very favourable to the lady whose conduct occasioned it."

On which Mr. Croker:—"Johnson, though dissatisfied with Mrs. Thrale, meant no reproach on this occasion—he makes a *parting use of the library*—makes a *valediction* to the *church*, and pronounces a prayer on quitting 'a *place* where he had enjoyed so much comfort,' *not* because Mrs. Thrale made him less

welcome there, but because *she*, and *he with her*, were leaving it. When Boswell came to town *six months later*, he found his friend domiciled in Mrs. Thrale's residence in Argyll Street. He seems to have taken leave of the *kitchen* as well as of the *church* at Streatham in Latin, 'Pransus sum Streathamie agninum crus coctum, &c.' "

This fairly summarizes the case and the answer.

It is quite true, no doubt, that if Johnson left, Mrs. Thrale was leaving Streatham with him; and that Johnson's "farewell" could not be reasonably prompted by a sense of grievance, arising out of the departure. But there is more than this assumption. The careful Boswell always speaks "by the card," and measures his words. He says particularly, this prayer was on leaving the "*family*," and it is so headed in the collection of prayers, "On leaving Mr. Thrale's *family*."

This distinction, apart from the air of struggle to master a sense of injury that is in the prayers, in fact makes it all clear. Johnson felt that the leaving Streatham was virtually his *congé*; and though he came on short visits afterwards, he felt that the old fashion of residence was to be at an end.

Mr. Hayward then, by many passages from Mrs. Thrale's diaries and letters, sets out how affectionate and constant she was to Johnson during this period. But the whole is but too transparent, and the reader

will see that, from the moment she conceived the extravagant passion for Piozzi, Johnson and his humours became a bore in short, and a restraint. She was dying to be rid of her daughters; she abused her late husband as a man of no feeling. She was at war with everyone; she had nothing in view but to gain "my Piozzi." This is often the course in such infatuations; and now to see how this view is made out.

Mr. Thrale died in 1781. Johnson was his executor. From that date "there is ample evidence," says Mr. Hayward, "that he neither felt nor suspected any diminution of kindness or regard."

It will be admitted that a widow was perfectly justified in getting rid of an arrangement which suited very well during her husband's life, and, it will be asked, where was Johnson's grievance? In the disingenuous pretexts used to get rid of him—the voyage to Italy, which was not, perhaps, intended; the secret penchant for Piozzi—which he saw was at the bottom of all, and which she concealed from him; her disgust to him (see her "Thraliana,") as contrasted with her devotion during her husband's life; and finally allowance must be made for the querulousness of an old man just stricken with palsy.

The tone of his letters is certainly *aigre*, and the assertions that he was "sent away," and that his

affection was not diminished, are significant. There follow various friendly utterances on her part during the next month, with declarations of Johnson that he loved her—and praises of the way he was taken care of at Streatham. Meanwhile she was setting down entries about his illnesses. “Dear Mr. Johnson is at last returned (Dec. 1781). My fear is lest he should grow paralytic,—there are really some symptoms already discoverable, I think, about the mouth particularly. I hope she (Quency) will be *out* of leading-strings at least before he gets *into* them, as poor women say of their children.”

And, again, in January, 1782:—“If God should take from me my monitor, my friend, my dear Dr. Johnson.” Again: “Travelling with him I could not bear; leaving him behind *he* could not bear, so his life or death must determine the execution or laying aside my schemes. I wish it were within reason to *hope* he could live for years.” And, again, in February, 1782: “What shall we do for him! If I lose him, I am more than undone: friend, father, guardant, confidant! God give me health and patience. What shall I do?” Six months later she had settled “what to do,” by actually getting rid of Mr. Johnson.

“To show Italy to my girls, and be showed it by Piozzi, has long been my dearest wish; but to leave Mr. Johnson shocked me, and to take him appeared

impossible. *His recovery, however, from an illness we all thought dangerous,* gave me courage to speak to him on the subject, and this day (after having been let blood) I mustered up resolution to tell him the necessity of changing a way of life I had long been displeased with."

The words in italics seem to explain the hysterical exclamation as to what she would do.

"Mr. Johnson thought well of the project, and wished me to put it early in execution: seemed less concerned at parting with me than I wished him. He told Hester in my absence that he would not go with me if I asked him." She affected to be very indignant at this reception of her plans. "My consciousness that no one *can* have the cause of concern that Johnson has, and my conviction that he has *no concern at all*, shall cure me of lamenting friends left behind.

"I begin to see (now everything shows it) that Johnson's connection with me is merely an interested one; he *loved* Mr. Thrale, I believe, but only wished to find in me a careful nurse and humble friend for his sick and his lounging hours; yet I really thought he could not have *existed* without *my conversation*, forsooth! He cares more for my roast beef and plum pudden, which he now devours too dirtily for endurance; and since he is glad to get rid of me, I'm sure I have good cause to desire in getting rid of him."

Mr. Hayward says no stress should be laid on this



ebullition of mortified vanity. But there should be; for the motive becomes quite plain. She was in a frantic state about Piozzi, and had almost made up her mind to marry him; "Now that dear, discerning little Burney says I'm in love with Piozzi;" and she proceeds to justify the proposed marriage. Her state of mind was indeed disordered; for, having left Streatham, and taken a house in London, let Streatham, and announced her voyage to Italy, it seemed curious to accuse him of wishing to get rid of her. There can be little doubt that her behaviour to him, as well as the proceedings about the houses, were all with the one view towards Piozzi—to make her more free. But it will be said, what proof is there, beyond the construction put on these proceedings, that such were her feelings. Her own statement to the public, in her "Anecdotes," will be the fitting comment on their "separation *de corps*," as Mr. Hayward strangely calls it. This should be carefully marked.

"I was forced to take advantage of my lost lawsuit, and *plead inability* of purse to remain longer in London or its vicinage. I had been crossed in my intentions of going abroad, and found it convenient, for every reason of health, peace, and pecuniary circumstances, to retire to Bath, *where I knew Mr. Johnson would not follow me*, and where I could for that reason command some little portion of time for my own use; a thing

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impossible while I remained at Streatham or at London, as my hours, carriage, and servants, had long been at his command, who would not rise in the morning till twelve o'clock perhaps, and oblige me to make breakfast for him till the bell rung for dinner, though much displeas'd if the toilet was neglected, and though much of the time we passed together was spent in blaming or deriding, very justly, my neglect of economy, and waste of that money which might make many families happy. The original reason of our connexion, his *particularly disordered health and spirits*, had been long at an end, and he had no other ailments than old age and general infirmity." She adds, too, that she could not, now that her husband was gone, support it without help.

Mr. Hayward feels the force of this, and argues:—

"If some of the cordiality shown him during the palmy days of their intimacy was forced, this rather enhances than lessens the merit of her services, which thus become elevated into sacrifices. The question is not how she uniformly felt, but how she uniformly behaved to him; and the fact of her being obliged to retire to Bath to get out of his way proves that there had been no rupture, no coolness, no serious offence given or taken on either side."

But Johnson's behaviour all through corresponds with the treatment he had received; and here the comments of those who were looking on come in:—

“It was observed by myself,” says Hawkins, “and other of Johnson’s friends, that soon after the decease of Mr. Thrale, his visits to Streatham became less and less frequent, and that he studiously avoided the mention of the place or the family.” On which Mr. Hayward : “This statement is preposterous, and is only to be partially accounted for by the fact that Hawkins, as his daughter informs us, had no personal acquaintance with Mrs. Thrale or Streatham.”

But Hawkins only means that he noticed that Johnson did not go out there, or talk of going—a matter that could be observed without acquaintance. Then came the parting at Streatham; and Boswell, Mr. Hayward pronounces, “*gratuitously infers* that he left it, alone angry and mortified, in consequence of her altered manner.”

Mr. Boswell says nothing of “leaving it, alone,” or, as we have seen, of its being in consequence of “her altered manner.” And, indeed, here Mr. Croker is not merely himself distorted in his views, but leads others after him: “Mr. Croker,” says Mr. Hayward, “whose protest against the groundless insinuations of Boswell should have put subsequent writers on their guard, states in a note:—‘He seems to have taken leave of the kitchen as well as the church at Streatham in Latin.’ The note of his last dinner there, done into English would run thus:—

‘I dined at Streatham on boiled leg of lamb, with

spinach, the stuffing of flour and raisins, round of beef, and turkey poult; and after the meat service, figs, grapes, not yet ripe in consequence of the bad season, with peaches also hard. I took my place at table in no joyful mood, and partook of the food moderately, lest I should finish by intemperance. If I rightly remember, the banquet at the funeral of Hadon came into my mind. When shall I revisit Streatham?

“The exclamation, ‘When shall I revisit Streatham?’ loses much of its pathos when connected with these culinary details.”

This turn is scarcely warranted. Is it not obvious that Johnson was setting down, by way of *souvenir*, what the last Streatham dinner consisted of?

Then we find him at Brighton on a six weeks' visit, of which the general report is that Johnson was in much ill-humour, and sometimes rude. It was here that the lady made up her mind to marry Piozzi. Johnson, though he was kept in the dark, was too shrewd not to have suspected something of what was going on. When they returned to town he was again at her house. But it had now been settled finally that she was to set off at once for Italy, and this was a sort of farewell. It was now that Boswell saw and wrote what he observed.

“On Friday, March 21 (1783), having arrived in London the night before, I was glad to find him at

Mrs. Thrale's house, in Argylo Street, appearances of friendship between them being still kept up. I was shown into his room; and after the first salutation he said, 'I am glad you are come; I am very ill.' . . .

"He sent a message to acquaint Mrs. Thrale that I was arrived. I had not seen her since her husband's death. She soon appeared, and favoured me with an invitation to stay to dinner, which I accepted. There was no other company but herself and three of her daughters, Dr. Johnson, and I. She too said she was very glad I was come; for she was going to Bath, and should have been sorry to leave Dr. Johnson before I came. This seemed to be attentive and kind; and I, *who had not been informed of any change, imagined all to be as well as formerly.* He was little inclined to talk at dinner, and went to sleep after it; but when he joined us in the drawing-room he seemed revived, and was again himself."

The picture here given is exactly what one would supply who had been reading the previous incidents, and the sagacious Boswell saw beneath the surface the forced cordiality of the hostess, the discontent of Johnson, trying to persuade himself that he was not distasteful.

Mr. Hayward yet thinks that this is "decisive," — "quite decisive so far as Boswell is concerned, and disposes at once of all his preceding insinuations to her disadvantage. He had not seen her since

Thrale's death; and now, finding them together and jealously scrutinising their tone and manner towards each other, he imagined all to be as well as formerly."

She then went to Bath to stay, and for nearly a year does not seem to have seen Johnson. They corresponded, and Mr. Hayward sees in their letters fresh proofs of the cordiality, but what is to be said of such passages as these:—"I am sitting down in no cheerful solitude to write a narrative which would once have affected you with tenderness and sorrow, but which you will perhaps pass over now with the careless glance of frigid indifference. For this diminution of regard, however, I know not whether I ought to blame you, who may have reasons which I cannot know, and I do not blame myself, who have for a great part of human life done you what good I could, and have never done you evil."

Two days before he had suffered a paralytic stroke, and he wrote—

"How this will be received by you I know not. I hope you will sympathise with me; but perhaps

"My mistress gracious, mild, and good,  
Cries! Is he dumb? 'Tis time he should."

"But can this be possible? I hope it cannot. I hope that what, when I could speak, I spoke of you, and to you, will be in a sober and serious hour remembered by you; and surely it cannot be remem-

bered but with some degree of kindness. I have loved you with virtuous affection; I have honoured you with sincere esteem. Let not all our endearments be forgotten, but let me have in this great distress your pity and your prayers. *You see I yet turn to you with my complaints as a settled and unalienable friend; do not, do not drive me from you, for I have not deserved either neglect or hatred.*

“O God! give me comfort and confidence in Thee; forgive my sins; and if it be thy good pleasure, relieve my diseases for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

“*I am almost ashamed of this querulous letter, but now it is written, let it go.’*”

Mr. Hayward lays stress on the words in Italics. But “you see I yet turn to you,” surely pre-supposes, “in spite of all that has happened.” Then a sort of rally in this affectionate intercourse followed; and, indeed, it may be fairly admitted that he had now really little to complain of in his friend, who having carried her point, seems to have tried to make up for past neglect or unkindness. Yet she should certainly have had allowance for his stricken and miserable state, and I fancy this letter is scarcely the one to have been written to so old a friend. The salmon is introduced rather coarsely.

“You tell one of my daughters that you know not with distinctness the cause of my complaints. I

believe she who lives with me knows them no better. It is kind in you to quarrel no more about expressions which were not meant to offend; but unjust to suppose, I have not lately thought myself dying. Let us, however, take the Prince of Abyssinia's advice, *and not add to the other evils of life the bitterness of controversy.*

"All this is not written by a person in high health and happiness, but by a fellow-sufferer, who has more to endure than she can tell, or you can guess; and now let us talk of the Severn salmons, which will be coming in soon; I shall send you one of the finest, and shall be glad to hear that your appetite is good."

This mature matron of forty was near "dying" of love for an Italian music-master. Johnson's sarcastic references to the indistinctness of her complaint, stung her. The next portion of the transaction was her marriage, communicated to him in an abrupt way.

This has excited hot debate and contending clamours; some contending that the fault lay with Johnson, others that Mrs. Piozzi was the injured person. Mr. Hayward is the lady's champion—Lord Macaulay, Johnson's. Boswell's account has been impeached, but it can be shown clearly that he spoke with *connaissance de cause*, and was as usual accurate in his statements.



This characteristic correspondence between her and Johnson on the announcement of the event, was first given to the public in a complete form by Mr. Hayward, only a portion of it having appeared. Her letter announces to him very becomingly the step she was about to take, to which she received a very rough, bitter reply, about forfeiting her fame, and "being ignominiously married." She retorted by declaring that her second husband's birth was not meaner than her first, nor his profession, nor his position in that profession, concluding by declaring that Johnson had offered her the greatest insult she had ever received, and virtually renouncing his friendship. Johnson replied in an amiable, resigned, and repentant tone. Now she had, of course, kept copies; but only chose to give to the world the first and last, which made it appear that Johnson's last was a reply to her first. Any one who reads the whole will see the obvious reasons for the omission. She was publishing the account of her relations with Johnson, his affection for her, his 250 letters, &c., and it would be awkward that so coarse an attack should wind up the whole.

Miss Hawkins found the missing letter among Johnson's papers, and brought it to her father, who returned it to Mrs. Piozzi.\*

\* There has been some confusion about the date of her marriage, owing to Johnson having *assumed* that she was married when she wrote.

I shall conclude with Malone's hostile comment on the transaction.

"August 9, at Mr. Windham's.—The company, Sir William Scott, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Dr. Laurence, Sir Henry Englefield, and myself. A very pleasant day.

"Sir Joshua and Sir W. Scott, in talking concerning that despicable woman Mrs. Piozzi, mentioned the letter which she wrote to Johnson in answer to his objurgatory one relative to her proposed marriage with an Italian singer. She has suppressed both letters in her book, and hers to Johnson happened by some accident not to be returned to her with the rest of her letters. She said in it, among other things, as both Sir W. Scott and Sir Joshua agreed, that however she might have disgraced *Miss Salisbury* by marrying the brewer, she could not disgrace *Mrs. Thrale* by marrying Piozzi—that his profession was a liberal one, which could not be said of the other; and she was told he excelled very much in his own way."

#### § *Attack on Miss Seward.*

A trait in Boswell's character which must be taken due account of, was his behaviour to such of the other

She did not condescend, or was too excited to correct his mistake; as like a woman in such a phrenzy of love, was, perhaps, pleased at the mistake. The correspondence is between June 30 and July 8, 1784. Piozzi arrived from Italy on July 1. The marriage, according to the Catholic rite, took place in London on July 23—that, according to the Protestant, on July 25, at Bath.—See *Mr. Hayward's "Memoirs."*

sex as had the misfortune to offend him in the course of his work. Any interference with his *magnum opus* stifled all feelings of chivalry and generosity. He became spiteful and venomous.

Three ladies incurred his resentment on this special ground—Miss Seward (Lichfield pride), Mrs. Montague, and Mrs. Thrale. Miss Seward, being Johnson's townswoman, might fairly claim to furnish either traditions or personal recollections of his career. She was, however, of the Della-cruscan school, and her work generally contained more of "fine writing" and "elegant reflections" than those hard facts, which would be useful to a Biographer. Such would seem to have been the character of many "sheets of Johnsonian narrative" with which she supplied Mr. Boswell, and such facts as those he found to be for the most part imaginative. There were two notable incidents on which she had descanted, namely, the story of the "Verses on a Duck," which Johnson was reported to have written at three years old, as well as the incidents connected with some lines on "A Sprig of Myrtle." Mr. Boswell was not a little embarrassed when he found that Miss Seward's information was of a legendary sort, and introduced a slight quotation and a compliment to avoid offending the lady.

"This anecdote of the duck, though disproved by internal and external evidence, has, nevertheless, upon supposition of its truth, been made the founda-

tion for the following ingenious and fanciful reflections of Miss Seward, amongst the communications concerning Dr. Johnson with which she has been pleased to favour me :—‘ These infant numbers contain the seeds of those propensities which, through his life, so strongly marked his character, of that poetic talent which afterwards bore such rich and plentiful fruits, &c., &c. ; rather than that bright and cheering one which gilds the period of closing life with the light of pious hope.’ This is *so beautifully imagined, that I would not suppress it.* But like many other theories, it is deduced from a supposed fact which is, indeed, a fiction.”

How Boswellian this is will be seen. Her facts prove to be unreal, but her reflections on the false facts are beautifully imagined. It was scarcely surprising that the lady was hurt at so grotesque a shape of compliment. But the real cause of offence was connected with the “*Sprig of Myrtle*” verses. In his first Edition he had said, “I am assured by Miss Seward that he conceived a tender passion for Miss Lucy Porter, daughter of the lady whom he afterwards married. Miss Porter was sent very young on a visit to Lichfield, where Johnson had frequent opportunities of seeing and admiring her, and he addressed to her the following verses on her presenting him with a nosegay of myrtle.”

Mr. Boswell, besides being pleased with this

authentic piece of gossip, was more delighted, as it enabled him to deal contemptuously with Mrs. Piozzi, who had ventured to report the anecdote in another shape. "Mrs. Piozzi, in her anecdotes, asserts that Johnson wrote this effusion of elegant tenderness not in his own person but for a friend, who was in love. But the lively lady is as inaccurate in this instance as in many others, for Miss Seward writes to me:—"I know those verses were addressed to Lucy Porter, when he was enamoured of her in his boyish days, two or three years before he had seen her mother, his future wife. He wrote them at my grandfather's, and gave them to Lucy in the presence of my mother, to whom he showed them on the instant. She used to repeat them to me, when I asked her for *the Verses Dr. Johnson gave her on a Sprig of Myrtle, which he had stolen or begged from her bosom*. We all know honest Lucy Porter to have been incapable of the mean vanity of applying to herself a compliment not intended for her."

It may be conceived what was Mr. Boswell's disgust in finding that he had been misled by Miss Seward, and that Mrs. Piozzi, whom he had attacked so wantonly, was correct. He received a communication from the gentleman for whom the verses were actually written. Could anything be so mortifying! But he did what was his duty manfully and conscientiously.

In his quarto fasciculus of "Corrections and Additions," he struck out the passage in the text about Miss Porter. Instead of, "and I am assured," &c., to the end of the paragraph, *read*, "but with what facility he could warble the amorous lay will appear from the following lines which he wrote for his friend, Mr. Hector." Then he makes the *amende* to Mrs. Piozzi.

"Mrs. Piozzi gives the following account of this little composition from Dr. Johnson's own relation to her, on her enquiring whether it was rightly attributed to him:—'I think it is now just forty years ago, that a young fellow had a sprig of myrtle given him by a girl he courted,' &c. In my first edition I was induced to doubt the authenticity of this account, by the following circumstantial statement in a letter to me from Miss Seward, of Lichfield:—

"'I *know*, &c.'

"Such was Miss Seward's statement, which I make no doubt she supposed to be correct; but it shows how dangerous it is to trust too implicitly to traditional testimony and ingenious inference; for Mr. Hector has lately assured me that Mrs. Piozzi's account is, in this instance, accurate, and that *he* was the person for whom Johnson wrote these verses, which have been erroneously ascribed to Mr. Hammond. I am obliged, in so many instances, to notice Mrs. Piozzi's incorrectness of relation, that I gladly seize

this opportunity of acknowledging, that however often, she is not always, inaccurate." (This last venomous stroke is admirable.)

Now begins the entertainment. Miss Seward, stung by this treatment, and inexpressibly mortified, now wrote letters to the "Gentleman's Magazine," abusing Johnson and the "too invidious comments" of his biographer. Before she had seen his supplementary notes her friends had expressed their indignation "at what they termed the ungrateful rudeness with which I was treated on his first page." As to the verses, she simply "declined to resign her conviction." She added in plain terms that, after Johnson's asserting such falsehoods as that "Buchanan was the only man of genius Scotland had produced," her facts were for the most part well known in Lichfield. But she scarcely reckoned on the vigorous retort which her statement drew forth from Mr. Boswell, and which, for the entertainment of the reader, is here subjoined at length. It was addressed to the editor of the "Gentleman's Magazine":—

"GREAT PORTLAND STREET,  
"Nov. 16, 1793.

"Miss Anne Seward, in a letter in your last Magazine, seems to apprehend that I have not treated her well in the first page of what she denominates a *pamphlet*, intituled, 'The Principal Corrections and

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Additions to the First Edition of Mr. Boswell's Life of Johnson.' As I should be sorry to be thought thus deficient in politeness, much more in justice, to any person, but particularly to a fair lady, I think it necessary to answer a charge thus hastily brought against me.

"This lady, as she herself has stated, did indeed cover *several sheets of paper* with the few anecdotes concerning Dr. Johnson, which she did me the honour to communicate to me. They were not only poetically luxuriant, but I could easily perceive were tinctured with a very strong prejudice against the person to whom they related. It, therefore, became me to examine them with much caution. One of them, the idle and improbable story of his making verses on a duck when he was but three years old, which good Mrs. Lucy Porter, among others, had credulously related, he himself had enabled me unquestionably to refute; notwithstanding which, Miss Seward adheres to her original tale, and, in the letter now under consideration, still refers to them as his composition. Another story which she sent me was a very extraordinary fact, said to have been mentioned in a conversation between his mother and him on the subject of his marrying Mrs. Porter, which appeared to me so strange as to require confirmation. Miss Seward having quoted as her authority for it a respectable lady of Lichfield, I wrote to that lady,



without mentioning the name of the person from whom the report was derived, inquiring only into the authenticity of it. The lady informed me she had never heard of the fact alluded to. As my book was to be a *real history*, and not a *novel*, it was necessary to suppress all erroneous particulars, however entertaining. I was, therefore, obliged to reduce into a very narrow compass indeed, what Miss Seward's fluent pen had expanded over many sheets. The account, however, which she gave, in contradiction to that of Mrs. Piozzi, of the circumstances attending Johnson's writing his beautiful 'Verses to a Lady on receiving from her a Sprig of Myrtle,' seemed so plausible that I with confidence inserted it in the first edition of my book, nor had I any doubt of it till Mr. Hector spontaneously assured me, by letter, that the fact was as Mrs. Piozzi has represented it. Having received this decisive evidence, it became my duty to correct, in my second edition, the erroneous account which I had been induced to give in my first; and, of course, to introduce that correction into the supplemental pages to my quarto edition, which I thought it incumbent on me to publish separately, and in the same form, for the accommodation of those who were possessed of that edition.

"Miss Seward says, that 'I ought in justice, as well as common politeness, since I mentioned her testimony, to have stated the reasons she gave for

that different evidence.' Now, Sir, *this I have done*. In the first edition these reasons are fully stated. It was not necessary that the Corrections and Additions—which are not, as she imagines, a *distinct pamphlet*, but *supplemental* to that edition, and *to be taken along with it*—should contain a repetition of the grounds of her testimony. It was enough that a refutation of them was there exhibited. But in the second edition itself, after stating these grounds in her own words, *I let my fair antagonist down as softly as might be*—thus:—

“ ‘Such was this lady’s statement, which I make no doubt she supposed to be correct; but it shows how dangerous it is to trust too implicitly to traditional testimony and ingenious inference; for Mr. Hector has lately assured me, that Mrs. Piozzi’s account is, in this instance, accurate.’

“The merit of the verses in question will not be lessened by Miss Seward’s attempt to depreciate them, as if good enough only for a schoolboy. They have been long and universally admired. They speak for themselves, and require no defence. But I cannot help observing that it is an awkward tale, that they were written by Dr. Johnson in his own person to Lucy Porter, whose *mother* he afterwards married. *Conjecture* must at once yield where the *fact* appears, and *that* we have from Mr. Hector. He also, in referring to the time when they were

written and given to him, says, 'Lucy Porter was then only a girl.' Miss Seward would fain have us suppose that Johnson had *first* written them to Lucy Porter, and *afterwards*, on being applied to by Mr. Hector for verses on receiving a myrtle from a lady, might give them to Mr. Hector, without thinking it necessary to declare their previous existence. But if Mrs. Lucy Porter was accurate in her recollection of this being presented to her by Dr. Johnson, Miss Seward's chronology *reversed* is much more natural and probable. Dr. Johnson might have written these for Mr. Hector when Lucy Porter was only a girl; and, when she was grown up, might have, with a pleasant ceremony, made them serve a second time for a compliment to her. That they were written for Mr. Hector, however, is all that is necessary to be proved; and it has been proved.

"Miss Seward surely had no occasion to say one word to guard against her being suspected of 'averring a conscious falsehood.' No such suspicion was ever insinuated. Undoubtedly it *was* indifferent to her whether Dr. Johnson's verses were addressed to Lucy Porter or written for Mr. Hector; therefore, when she made her statement of the case she had no motive of vanity or interest. Now it may, perhaps, not be indifferent, because she seems exceedingly zealous that her statement should be thought right. But there is no question either as to con-

scious falsehood or conscious truth; it is merely a matter of argument upon evidence, and, I think, a very plain one.

"I hope, then, Mr. Urban, this fair lady will be convinced that I have neither been unpolite nor unjust to her. But from the veneration and affection which I entertain for the character of my illustrious friend, I cannot be satisfied without expressing my indignation at the malevolence with which she has presumed to attack that great and good man. In the present letter she seriously accuses HIM of '*conscious falsehood*' in '*an assertion*' 'that Buchanan was the only man of genius which his country had ever produced.' From the frequency of what she calls '*similar false assertions*,' she concludes that 'his veracity was of that species which, straining at gnats, swallows CAMELS.' Miss Seward does not perceive that such sallies as these, which are recorded to show Dr. Johnson's wonderful dexterity in retort, are not assertions in the sense which concerns truth or falsehood; they are evidently *ardentia verba* (*glowing words*)—I ask her pardon for quoting a Latin phrase uttered in witty contest. They are not even expressive of his *opinion*; but if they could be supposed to convey his real opinion, still they would have no concern with his *veracity*. When he did give his honest judgment on the merits of certain poets, where he differed from a shoal of small critics, and,

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in a few instances, was thought by men of a superior rank in taste to be in the wrong, he might be charged with *error*; but it is from a defect in the *reasoning faculty* when, in such instances, he is charged with *falsehood* or *envy*. Dr. Johnson's strict, nice, and scrupulous regard to *truth* was one of the most remarkable circumstances in his character, and was often mentioned as such by his friends, particularly Sir Joshua Reynolds. *Falsehood*, therefore, was at the utmost distance from him, and his transcendent abilities and acquirements, his extensive and increasing fame, set him far above *envy*. Miss Seward does not know that her injurious reflection refutes itself; but her eagerly making it, however weak and ineffectual it may be, fully discovers her intention.

“So far from having any hostile disposition towards this lady, I have, in my ‘Life of Dr. Johnson,’ spoken of her in as handsome terms as I could; I have quoted a compliment paid by him to one of her poetical pieces; and I have withheld his opinion of herself, thinking that she might not like it. I am afraid it has reached her by some other means; and thus we may account for various attacks by her on her venerable townsman since his decease, even in your Magazine, where I have been sorry to see them, —some avowed, and with her own name, and others, as I believe, in various forms and under several signatures. What are we to think of the scraps of

letters between her and Mr. Hayley, impotently endeavouring to undermine the noble pedestal on which the public opinion has placed Dr. Johnson? But it is unnecessary to take up any part of your valuable *Miscellany* in exposing the little arts which have been employed by a cabal of minor poets and poetesses who are sadly mortified that Dr. Johnson, by his powerful sentence, assigns their proper station to writers of this description.

"JAMES BOSWELL."\*

Miss Seward replied, insinuating that Johnson might have good grounds for denying that he had been in love with a young lady whose mother he later married. She also gave this well-earned thrust:—"What Mr. Boswell has *generously* recorded concerning her father, at whose house he has been frequently entertained with the most friendly hospitality." †

\* "Gentleman's Magazine," vol. lxiii., p. 1009.

† A good specimen of Boswell's return for such hospitality is the following. The most remarkable part of which is his utter unconsciousness that he was behaving unbecomingly:—

"'Mrs. Gastrel, at the lower house on Stowhill, desires Mr. Boswell's company to dinner at two.' I accepted of the invitation, and had here another proof how amiable his character was in the opinion of those who knew him best. I was not informed, till afterwards, that Mrs. Gastrel's husband was the clergyman who, while he lived at Stratford-upon-Avon, where he was proprietor of Shakspeare's garden, with Gothic barbarity cut down his mulberry-tree, and, as Dr. Johnson told me, did it to vex his neighbours. His lady, I have reason to believe, on the same authority, participated in the guilt of what the enthusiasts of our immortal bard deem almost a species of sacrilege."

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Mr. Boswell again wrote :

“GREAT PORTLAND STREET,

“Jan. 20, 1794.

“MR. URBAN,—Having been too hastily charged in your Magazine, by Miss Anna Seward, with *want of politeness and even common justice* towards her, I was naturally anxious to vindicate myself, which I accordingly did in November last, by showing, in the most satisfactory manner, that I had been careful to express myself with due delicacy when obliged to correct an error into which she had been led, as to the true history of Dr. Johnson’s writing the verses on a sprig of myrtle. I refer to my statement—I trust it with confidence to the candour of all who are capable of reasoning and judging of evidence. I, at the same time, could not but discover some indignation at the malevolence with which that fair lady had presumed to attack the great and good Dr. JOHNSON, whose character was altogether unconnected with the inconsiderable matter in question. Whether he wrote those beautiful verses for himself or for a friend, his merit as a poet must be the same. The investigation of their history was important only for the sake of truth, and in fairness to another lady, whom Miss Seward had induced me to contradict on grounds sufficiently probable, as I admitted in my additional note, I should have thought that there was no occasion for any more writing upon

the subject; but I am sorry to find that our poetess has made a second attack, at great length, and in such a temper as must be very uneasy to a gentle bosom. She, indeed, has candour enough not to resume the charge from which I vindicated myself, and which was the cause of my animadversity upon her at all. But she throws some censure upon me, and a great deal upon Dr. Johnson, of which, Sir, I leave you and your readers to discern the motives.

“Miss Seward may be assured that she is as much mistaken as to me as she is as to Dr. Johnson. I am not her *foe*, though I committed to the flames those sheets of ‘*Johnsonian Narratives*’ with which I was favoured by her, among the almost innumerable communications which I obtained concerning the illustrious subject of my great biographical work. I, however, extracted from those sheets all that I could possibly consider to be authentic. Nay, so desirous was I to give Miss Seward every advantage, that, after refuting the *impossible* legend of Johnson’s verses on a Duck when he was but three years old, to which, for *a woman’s reason*, she still pertinaciously adheres, I preserved the ingenious reflections which she, supposing it to be true, had made on that idle tale. I am not her *foe*, though I cannot allow that the censure of BACON by POPE, that Prince of Poets, who could

‘Expatriate free o’er all this scene of man,’

is any reason why it is not presumptuous in Miss *Nancy Seward* to judge and condemn Dr. JOHNSON, 'the brightest ornament of the eighteenth century,' as Mr. Malone has truly and elegantly described him. I am not her *foe*; though instead of joining in the republican cry as she does, that Johnson has been unjust to Milton, I declare my admiration of his very liberal and just praise of that great Poet, who was the most odious character, both in public and private, of any man of genius that ever lived; in public, the defender of the murderers of his sovereign, the blessed martyr; in private, the sulky tyrant over his own wretched, uneducated, and helpless daughters.

"Why should I be my fair antagonist's *foe*? She never did me any harm, nor do I apprehend that she ever can. She protests against entering further into a *paper war* with me. If there be such *war* it is all on one side, for it is not in my thoughts. That kind of conflict is not what I wish to have with ladies; and I really must complain that my *old friend* (if she will forgive the expression) should represent me so unlike myself.

"It is very hard that Miss Seward's misconceiving a witty retort for a false assertion, should subject her to so woeful a deception as to imagine Doctor Johnson in any degree deficient in a sacred regard for truth. It is not in my power to make the distinction plainer than I have made it in my former letter.

“The lady quotes as genuine a sarcasm of Doctor Johnson on Lord Chesterfield, in these words: ‘He is a wit among Lords, and a Lord among wits,’ which, it seems, she has heard repeated by numbers. Here is a proof of the justice of the late Mr. Fitzherbert’s observation that it is not everyone that can carry a *bon mot*. This representation of Johnson’s saying is flat and unmeaning, indeed. What he did say is recorded at p. 238, vol. i. of my book, which Miss Seward handsomely, and I believe sincerely styles, ‘interesting memoirs.’ ‘This man I thought had been a Lord among wits; but I find he is only a wit among Lords.’ It would, therefore, be better if Miss Seward would not boast of all the communications concerning Johnson, as ‘conveying strong internal evidence of their verity from characteristic turn of expression;’ nor would it be any disadvantage to her if she should sometimes distrust the accuracy of her memory (I seriously protest, I mean no more.)

“The detection of so considerable a mistake should make Miss Seward not so sure of having read, either in Dr. Johnson’s works or in the records of his Biographers, an assertion concerning Dr. Watts, which she calls ‘a base stigma and slander, and unchristian-like;’”\* and pours forth in her customary

\* Miss Seward had accused Johnson of stating that “Watts was one of the few poets who could look forward with rational hope to the mercy of their God.” It was this sentiment that she stigmatised so vehemently.

manner a profusion of words and abuse. It is not in the life of that excellent man; and if Miss Seward has read it anywhere, she has read what was not true. That poets and poetesses also have too often been not of the most exemplary lives, is universally known; but Dr. Johnson never uttered such a sentence as Miss Seward imputes to him. She, indeed, seems doomed to perpetual error, for she mentions a sentence quoted by her anonymous correspondent from Warburton, which she, with all imaginable ease, calls impious; when, in truth, that admirable sentence is not quoted from Warburton, and was not written by Warburton, but by a most distinguished author now alive.\*

“ Let me ask, also, if it be fair in Miss Seward to quote the passage which I have quoted from Bishop Newton unfavourable to Dr. Johnson, leave out the apology which I have made for that prelate, namely, ‘the disgust and peevishness of old age’: as also the general and permanent opinion which Bishop Newton entertained of Dr. Johnson, of whom he says in the same passage: ‘that he respected him, not only for his genius and learning, but valued him much more for the more amiable part of his character, his humanity and charity, his morality and religion.’ Miss Seward dreams that I have insinuated ‘envy and selfish prejudice against her,’ in my defensive

\* Bishop Hurd.

letter; for this, after reading it over again and again, I cannot perceive the smallest foundation. She may make herself quite easy on that head, for I don't even suspect that my fair antagonist ('herself all the nine,')\* envies any human being. Neither am I at all conscious of 'heroical attempts to injure a defenceless female, (meaning herself), with which she charges me.†

" 'How canst thou, lovely Nancy, thus cruelly—?' Is it an injury to mention in civil terms that she has been misinformed as to a fact? Is it an injury to reprehend with generous warmth, her malevolent attacks on 'my Guide, Philosopher, and Friend.' Would that she were *offenceless!* *defenceless* she is not; as she now avers that she can at pleasure put on the masculine attire, and lay about her as a second Drawcansir, armed *cap à pied*, in the masked character of *Benvolio*. She modestly wishes that the strictures under that signature should be 'recurred to and considered well.' She may rest satisfied that they have been well and truly tried, and that the verdict of ineffectual ill-nature will ever be set aside. I

\* See a short dialogue, in verse, between her and Mr. Hayley, written by Professor Porson.

† "Into a paper war," Miss Seward had closed her letter—"with a man, who, after professing himself my friend, becomes causelessly my foe, I will not farther enter. New instances of Mr. Boswell's heroical attempts to injure a defenceless female, who has ever warmly vindicated him, must ultimately redound more to his dishonour than hers."



wonder at her seeming to glory in such effusions. And now to put an end to all future disputation on the mighty points of the *Duck* and the *Myrtle*, which have been the causes of this *War* ;

‘ This tumult in a vestal’s veins.’ ”

Thus pleasantly does our Boswell rally the fair combatant. Such, too, is a brief review of these various feminine controversies.

## CHAPTER IV.

### OLLA PODRIDA.

IN these pages I have not attempted to do more than show that there are many interesting matters connected with Boswell and his "Life of Johnson," which, though assumed to be settled, require fresh investigation. These, from want of space and other reasons, I have not ventured to *approfondir*. There are some other points, in reference to new materials and sources of information, which an editor will have to consider.

The curious investigator will find much entertainment and instruction in the catalogues of autograph letters, offered for sale by auction, and which the intelligent purveyors of Leicester-square and Wellington Street always take care to garnish with specimens of the wares offered. These seem to tempt the hesitating, much as the agreeable savour from a restaurant would the hungry passer-by. It is, perhaps, the next best thing to the enjoyment of the food itself. Mr. Lewis Pocock has for many years been well known as the eager collector of Johnson's papers and relics, and by his diligence secured an amount

of such treasures as would have influenced the envy and curiosity of Boswell himself.

These valuables were dispersed by auction, appropriately enough, at Sir Joshua Reynolds' old mansion in Leicester Square. But the interesting catalogue gives us some useful glimpses of Johnson's history. "Considerations on Corn," an Essay in 16 pages, entirely in his autograph. "The Bible" (8vo., Lond., 1772), belonging to and used by Dr. Johnson, given to him by Dr. Strahan; a memorandum to this effect in Johnson's handwriting is at the back of the title-page, dated 26th October, 1771. "Brief Autographic Memoranda," in Latin and English, of his feelings, &c., on the 8th, 9th, 10th June, 1784, "Very breathless and dejected," on the first date. "Signature to an Exchequer receipt for £75," being three months' pension (due Octr. 10th), Dec. 3rd, 1783; rare. "The Sugar Cane," in his autograph, written by way of preliminary to a critique on Dr. Grainger's "Sugar Cane," a poem, which was printed in three numbers of the *London Chronicle* in 1764. "A beautiful and most pious Prayer," in his autograph, dated Jan. 1, p.m. 11, 1784; the year in which he died: "His Diary" in 1781-1783," commencing with a pious meditation in the Summer-house at Streatham, and says, "My purpose is to pass eight hours every day in some serious employment." Entries of various memoranda follow, all in his auto-

graph. "Account of the Last Scene of his Life," written by the Hon. John Byng, and addressed to Mr. Malone. "Original and unpublished Lines on Miss Hickman, playing on the Spinnet," 1 page folio; autograph attested by J. Turton. "To Gain," with the full meaning; original Slip intended for the Dictionary. The first ten pages of the "Life of Rowe," entirely autograph. "An extremely curious Document relating to the Club"; with memoranda of motions made, votes taken," &c. Of Mr. Poore, who had put up to be balloted for, Dr. Johnson writes: "Mr. Poore is a very proper man, and a man of great knowledge." Notwithstanding this high recommendation, Mr. Poore was not elected. (May, 1780.) "To Mrs. Thrale," Skie, Sept. 6, 1773, descriptive of his travels in Scotland—scarcity of trees—Druidical remains. Banff, Elgin, Forres, "over the heath where Macbeth met the witches, but had no adventure. . . . More beggars than I have ever seen in England." Nairn, Fort George, Inverness, Fort-Augustus, Glenmorrison, "here we had eggs, and mutton, and a chicken, and a sausage, and rum. In the afternoon tea was made by a very decent girl in a printed linen. She engaged me so much, that I made her a present of 'Cocker's Arithmetick.'"

A large number of Dr. Taylor's letters—Johnson's old friend—were also in Mr. Pocock's collection. These were written almost at the grave's edge, and were of

a very earnest, almost pathetic kind. We may wonder why these were kept back from Boswell. They appear better than the very few supplied. But Dr. Taylor seems to have been sought by the various biographers. For thus writes Mrs. Piozzi:—

“Do you know who Dr. Taylor gives his anecdotes to? Dr. Johnson bid me once ask *him* for memoirs, if I was the survivor; and so I would, but I am afraid of a refusal, as I guess Sir John Hawkins is already in possession of all that Dr. Taylor has to bestow. There lives, however, at Birmingham, a surgeon, Mr. Edward Hector, whom, likewise, Mr. Johnson referred me to: he once saw Mr. Thrale and me, and, perhaps, would be more kind, and more likely to relate such things as I wish to hear,—could you go between us and coax him.”

Even the few scraps quoted from these Taylor letters in the catalogue are of interest:—

(*June 6th*, 1780.) “Be sure whatever else you do to keep your mind easy & do not let little things disturb you, bustle about your hay and your cattle and keep yourself busy with such things as give you little solicitude.” (*Dec. 7th*, 1782.) “I am now willing to resume the offices of life.” (*Sept. 24th*, 1783.) “My case is what you think it, of the worst kind.” “Nothing to be done but by the knife.” (*Oct. 20th*, 1783.) “Your prohibition to write till the operation is performed, is likely, if I

observed it, to interrupt our correspondence for a long time." (*Nov. 19th, 1783.*) Letter of advice for the preservation of his health. "No worldly thing but your health is now worth your thought. If anything troublesome comes, drive it away without a parley."\* (*Jan. 3rd, 1784.*) "I scarce get any sleep, what I have is in a chair. My lower parts begin to swell. May we all be received to mercy." (*Oct. 20th, 1784.*) Complaining of his failing health. "But I go on hoping & hoping, no pity and trying and trying." (*Oct. 23rd, 1784.*) "Coming down from a very restless night, I find your letter, which made me a little angry; you tell me that recovery is in my power, this indeed I should be glad to hear, if I could once believe it, but you mean to charge me with neglecting or opposing my own health, tell me, therefore, what I do that hurts me, and what I neglect that would help me. Tell it as soon as you can." This was Dr. Johnson's last letter to Dr. Taylor, and is thus endorsed in the handwriting of Dr. Taylor:—"This is the last letter; my answer, which were the words of advice, he gave to Mr. Thrale the day he died, he resented extremely from me. Some person has torn off the bottom." A small Pocket Book, originally belonging to and used by Dr. Johnson, and containing memoranda of a medical nature in his

\* Some of these entries are taken from Mr. Harvey's and other Johnsonian catalogues.

handwriting. At his death it came into possession of Francis Barber, his black servant, and subsequently into that of Mr. Pocock. Autograph Letter, signed. Addressed to the Rev. Dr. Taylor. (Dated *June 23rd.*) Speaks of his illness and various matters. "Boswell has a great mind to draw me to Lichfield, and as I love to travel with him, I have a mind to be drawn," and other observations of interest. (*Feb. 9th, 1775.*) Referring to some matter in dispute: "I do not conceive myself able to judge the question between you and that wild woman—I consider her as the slave of her own appetite, as a being that acts only but by the grossest motives," entreats him if the cause is tried to push it on as fast as he can that he may rid his mind of the anxiety—is alarmed at what he says of his state of perturbation—advises him not to trust himself alone, &c.; concludes, "Take great care of your health both of body and mind, and do not let melancholy thoughts lay hold on you." (*May 3rd, 1777.*) "Mr. Lucas has just been with me, he has compelled me to read his tragedy, which is but a poor performance, and yet may perhaps put money into his pocket, it contains nothing immoral or indecent & therefore we may very reasonably wish it success." (*Dec. 20th, 1783.*) "I am very severely crushed by my old spasm, which suffering me to get no sleep in the night necessarily condemns the day to sluggishness and idleness. I am indeed exceedingly dis-

tressed." (*June 23rd, 1773.*) Friendly letter of condolence. "Do not lie down and suffer without struggle or resistance. I fancy that neither of us uses exercise enough." (*Jan. 2nd, 1742.*) Speaking of Mrs. Johnson's illness. (*Oct. 2nd, 1765.*) "My Shakespere is now out of my hands." "I think it time that we should see one another & spend a little of our short life together."

As we now draw to the close of this little work, we will turn again to our faithful chronicler, whose moods are ever interesting. It may be said that in all his letters is revealed a *bonhomie* and good-nature which is attractive, and reveals the secret of the favour with which he was welcomed. Here are two of his letters never before published:—

"BICKHAM, NEAR PLYMOUTH.

"21st Sept., 1792.

"MY LORD,—On my way to Cornwall, to visit our worthy friend Temple, I intended, according to your Lordship's obliging invitation, to have payed my respects to your Lordship and Lady Lisburne at Mamhead; but I found myself hurried, and deferred it till my return. My two eldest daughters are with me, and, if not inconvenient, will do ourselves the honour to dine at Mamhead on Monday next. I request that your Lordship will take the trouble to let me know by a note, which I shall inquire for at the



post-house at Chudleigh. My daughters join me in respectful compliments.

“And I ever am, my Lord, your Lordship’s most obedient, humble servant,  
“JAMES BOSWELL.”

“GREAT PORTLAND STREET,  
“17th June, 1791.

“MY DEAR LORD,—Sir Richard Symons having asked me to a very pleasant dinner party to-morrow, I shall not have the honour of making my bows in Windsor Castle till Sunday morning. My son shall obey your Lordship’s summons, and learn from his father to respect John Carlisle, as Sir Joseph Bankes calls your Lordship—of whom I ever am, with all sincerity, your much obliged and faithful servant.”

Finally, I shall give as a *bonne bouche* an extract from a judgment on copyright delivered by Boswell’s father, the eccentric Lord Auchinleck :—

“This question is new and interesting. Till very lately, it never received a judgment in any court of Europe. It has received but one, and that in England, the laws of which country are, in many particulars, special to itself; and when it was there determined, the court was divided.

“We have had the question ably handled in mutual information, both of them well drawn; in particular, that on the side of the defenders is a performance which does honour to the author. We have likewise

had laboured and long pleadings, and are now to give our opinions.

“In the entry, I cannot help observing that it has been well said by a wise man, *Nil tam absurdum quod no dicendo fit probabile*. By much labouring any subject, the attention is apt to be drawn away from the real merits, and run into extraneous matter, as I think that has been the case here, and that the diversity of opinions has been owing to it. In the opinion I am to give, I shall endeavour to confine myself to the proper merits of the case, without launching out into many of the learned arguments both sides have insisted on.

“I’ll own that the cause, when stripped of extraneous matter, does not appear to me to be difficult. The question is, whether he who writes a book and publishes it, has by common law, independent of any statute or privilege granted him by the State, a perpetual property in that performance, in the same way as he had before publishing ?

“It is agreed by all that, while the book is not published, whether the work be in the author’s head or his cabinet, it is absolutely his, and no man can deprive him of it. But the question is, if this right continues after publication ?

“There has been much said on the necessary consequence from its being once owned to be a man’s property, that it should continue to be so. But,

with submission, the reasoning appears to me not just. My thoughts are mine so long as I retain them in my mind; but if I utter them *nescit vox missa reverti*, every hearer has a right to them as much as I. A man need not speak in company unless he chooses it; but if he speaks, and does not enjoin secrecy, every man may propagate the saying with impunity. If a man throws out a thing in company, whether instructive or entertaining, can he maintain that he has a right of property in this *bon mot* to him and his for ever? And here I beg to say, unless it can be shown there is a right of property in what a person utters verbally, there can be none in what he publishes to all mankind by printing it. Indeed, when a man publishes his thoughts, he gives them away still more than the man who utters them in conversation. The latter gives them only to his hearers; but the former to the whole habitable earth.

“For illustrating this: suppose several people well acquainted with this country should go up to the castle of Edinburgh, and one of them, who liked speaking, should immediately describe all the objects he saw from it, would he acquire a right ever after to that description, and would he, by printing it, create a right not in him before?”

THE END.

February 16, 1880.

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